



MEDIA GUIDE
2017 WESTERN AUSTRALIA GENERAL ELECTION

FOREWORD

This Guide contains information to assist the media in reporting on the 2017 State election.

All media enquiries (including requests for interviews) are handled centrally by the Commission and I therefore ask that they be addressed to our media mailbox media@waec.wa.gov.au Enquiries will be dealt with promptly.

The Commission's election call centre should NOT be contacted for media enquiries; it will be more expeditious to contact the media mailbox. Individual Returning Officers should only be contacted to obtain permission to film or photograph in a polling place or to check localised information such as when the ballot paper draw will be conducted in a particular electoral district.

Please note that the Commission's independent and impartial role generally precludes us from commenting on matters that relate directly to political campaigning, such as statements made by one candidate or political party about another.

Further information relating to the election timetable and procedures is available online at www.elections.wa.gov.au

Media outlets are free to re-publish any of the information in this Guide, or on the Commission's website, or to link their own website to the elections website. Feedback is welcome.



David Kerslake
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

QUICK CONTACTS

Election website - www.elections.wa.gov.au

WAEC Call Centre - 136306

Media Mailbox - media@waec.wa.gov.au

CONTACTING THE WAEC

ALL media enquiries should be directed to the media mailbox at media@waec.wa.gov.au. We appreciate that media prefer to have a direct contact number, but the media mailbox will be regularly monitored and this way we can ensure enquiries are handled in the order they are received.

Emails that just ask us to call back, with no indication as to the nature of the enquiry, are unlikely to help us or you. Please set out clearly:

- the subject of your enquiry, including specific questions; and
- your deadline (allowing a reasonable time for us to respond).

If seeking an interview with the Electoral Commissioner, please indicate the topic and preferred time.

Entering polling places

If your interest is in filming in a polling place please ensure that:

- prior approval is obtained from the Returning Officer (the only time media personnel may enter a polling place without permission is to cast their own vote);
- pictures do not reveal how an individual has voted;
- you seek the agreement of any individual who may be identifiable; and
- electors and polling staff are not inconvenienced or unduly delayed.

Exit polling

- The collection, canvassing, soliciting or inviting of signatures or comments for the purpose of any petition, opinion poll or survey, or the distribution of any information for such a purpose is restricted within 100 metres in all directions from any entrance of a polling place.
- Electors cannot be compelled to divulge how they voted.

ELECTION TIMETABLE

A copy of the writ for the election, containing key dates, has been published on the elections website www.elections.wa.gov.au.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2017?

The 2017 general election will see some major innovations, some as a result of changes to the Electoral Act.

Direct enrolment

Previously electors were solely responsible for enrolling or updating their address details. Following a recent amendment to the Electoral Act the Commission is now authorised to use reliable data sources to directly enrol eligible electors when they turn 18 and to update their enrolment whenever they change address. Over time, the use of such data will see a significant increase in the number of Western Australians eligible to vote in State elections.

Internet voting

In the past some electors with disabilities (such as blind and vision impaired) were not able to vote in secret because they needed help to fill out their ballot papers. Internet and telephone voting options are now available to electors with a disability or who are incapacitated, enabling them to vote in secret (many for the first time).

Removal of restrictions of early voting

At past elections electors could only vote early if they had a valid reason, such as being unable to get to a polling place on Election Day.

The eligibility requirements have been abolished; anyone who *prefers* to vote early is entitled to do so. This change recognises modern lifestyles and employment patterns and is likely to continue the upward trend in early voting. Available early votes will still be counted on election night.

Revised ballot paper for Upper House

The ballot paper for the Legislative Council will now feature *above and below the line* voting in a layout similar to the Senate ballot paper, replacing the previous *side-by-side* format. Please note: only the layout has changed. Electors may cast a single 'ticket' vote above the line, or vote for all candidates in order of preference below the line. Clear instructions will appear on the ballot paper.

Redistribution

Following the latest distribution and as a result of significant demographic change, the boundaries of 50 out of 59 lower house districts have been altered, many substantially. Electors can locate their nearest polling booth on the elections website.

HOW CAN THE MEDIA ASSIST?

The media can be of great assistance to the Commission and the public in disseminating essential election information.

Close of rolls

In particular, the electoral roll closes at 6 p.m. on Thursday 9 February. Anyone who is not enrolled at that point will not be able to vote. Although the Commission can enrol electors directly using data sources, there is an inevitable lag in the receipt of such data from other agencies. In the week preceding Thursday 9 February the Commissioner will be available for media interviews to provide last minute reminders to electors to check and update their enrolment. Other key milestones include:

<i>Close of nominations:</i>	12 noon on 10 February
<i>Commencement of early voting:</i>	Monday 20 February
<i>Cut off for postal vote applications:</i>	Wednesday March 8 (Interviews on this topic best done a couple of days earlier)
<i>Election Day</i>	Saturday 11 March

REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES

In Western Australia there are 16 registered political parties. Only parties that have met the registration requirements are entitled to have their names listed on the ballot paper.

The parties on the Register are:

- Animal Justice party
- Australian Christians
- Australian Labor Party
- Daylight Saving Party WA
- Family First Party
- Fluoride Free WA Party
- Julie Matheson for Western Australia
- Liberal Democratic Party
- National Party of Australia
- Pauline Hanson's One Nation
- Shooters and Fishers Party
- Socialist Alliance WA
- The Greens
- The Liberal Party of Australia
- The Flux Party – WA
- Micro Business Party

Parties, groups and independents are eligible for public funding for each candidate who receives a minimum of 4% of the formal first preference vote. The funding rate is \$1.87 per vote received.

ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS

Compulsory voting

Voting in Western Australian State elections is compulsory. The fine for not voting (without a reasonable excuse) is \$20 (for a first offence; for subsequent offences the fine rises to \$50).

Dissemination of election information

The Commission has decided that it will no longer send an individually addressed information letter to each elector as occurred at the 2013 general election. This decision takes account of widening access to the internet as well as increases in postal delivery times and charges.

Our advertising will direct electors to information available on the election website www.elections.wa.gov.au

The Commission will also provide election information directly by email or SMS where electors' contact details are available.

The Commission's Call Centre is now open until 16 March 2017, between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm. Members of the public can call 136306 from anywhere in WA for the cost of a local call. Election information is also available on Facebook at WAElections.

Ballot paper draw

In the afternoon on Friday 12 February (after the close of nominations) the draw for ballot paper order will be carried out by individual Returning Officers. Members of the media are welcome to attend the ballot paper draw in their area, or may check for updates on the Commission's website by mid-late afternoon.

Please note that candidates may NOT withdraw their nomination after the official close. If a candidate, for whatever reason, is 'dis-endorsed' by their party AFTER the close of nominations their name must still appear on the ballot paper with the party's name alongside.

Voting options

Electors have a number of voting options:

- at a polling booth within their electoral district on Election Day;
- as an 'absent' voter in another district on Election Day;

- at an early voting centre;
- by postal vote; or
- at a special institution or remote location visited by a mobile polling team.

Internet and telephone voting facilities are available to people with insufficient literacy skills, electors who are vision impaired and electors who are incapacitated.

Election Day voting

On Election Day polling places will open at 8.00 a.m. and close at 6.00 p.m. sharp.

Early Voting

Early voting commences on Monday 20 February, at special early voting centres and at most magistrates' courts in regional WA. Opening hours vary but most centres are open between 9 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Further information is available on the elections website.

Postal Voting

Applications to vote by post close on Wednesday 8 March 2016.

Interstate and overseas voting

Voting facilities are available at Electoral Commissions located in other Australian capital cities and at a small number of overseas locations. Addresses are listed on the elections website.

Locations

A list of all polling places, mobile polling locations and early voting centres can be found on the elections website www.elections.wa.gov.au

COUNTING OF VOTES

Election night

In polling places, counting of primary votes for the Legislative Assembly will commence at 6 pm, followed by a Two Candidate Preferred (TCP) or 'notional' count (see below) of Legislative Assembly preferences. Voting trends should be apparent in most seats by around 9 pm. Legislative Council votes will be counted last but only 'above the line votes' will be counted. This will give an indication of the likely outcome for the majority but not all positions in each Legislative Council region. Counting of 'below the line' votes will be undertaken at the Commission's central Count Centre commencing on Monday 13 March.

All available early votes for the Legislative Assembly will be counted at the Commission's *count centre* at 30 Beaufort Street, Northbridge on election night but the counting of Legislative Council early votes will not commence until around noon on Sunday.

Legislative Assembly Two Party Preferred Count

For the Legislative Assembly notional count the Commission chooses the two candidates in each district considered most likely to receive the highest number of first preference votes. On election night officials in polling places will allocate preferences from all other candidates to the two chosen candidates to provide an indication of the likely outcome in each district once all votes are in and all preferences formally allocated.

As the term suggests, the notional count is indicative only. The choice of leading candidates is usually based on historical trends and in some cases may prove to be incorrect (in which case the TCP count will be discontinued and will not be published on the election website). In close seats the likely winner may not be known until all postal votes are received and after a full allocation of preferences.

Formal distribution of preferences

The formal distribution of preferences for each district will not commence until some days after Election Day. Commencement of the formal preference count is dependent, not on the margin between the two leading candidates, but the two least successful. Until the Commission can be certain which candidate will finish last on first preferences, the formal distribution of preferences cannot commence. (This is the reason the Commission conducts a TCP count on election night, to provide the best possible indication of who is likely to form government.) In addition, the Commission will not move to declare a result while there remains a mathematical possibility that someone other than the leading candidate could yet emerge the winner (for example Candidate A leads Candidate B by 1000 votes but there are 1100 votes still to be counted). Typically, most formal distribution of preference counts are conducted on the weekend following Election Day.

DIRECT FEED OF RESULTS

While most media outlets simply refer to the election website on election night, the Commission can provide a data link to enable media to have direct access to results as they become available. These are available in either XML format or as a CSV file. Please send an email to our Media Mailbox to register your interest.

THE VOTING SYSTEM

Legislative Assembly

For the Legislative Assembly one member is elected per district. The voting system – known as *full preferential* – requires voters to number ALL the boxes in order to indicate their order of preference for every candidate.

If no candidate receives an absolute majority of all first preference votes, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is excluded and their votes transferred to the remaining candidates in accordance with the preferences listed by voters. This process continues until one candidate achieves an absolute majority (50%+ 1) of all formal votes cast.

Legislative Council

In the Legislative Council six members are elected for each region, using a voting system known as *proportional representation*.

The ballot paper is divided into two parts, ABOVE and BELOW THE LINE. Parties, groups and individuals are listed above the line and may lodge a voting ticket listing all candidates in a preference order. Electors who vote above the line only have to place the number '1' beside the party, group or candidate of their choice. Preferences will then be distributed as per the lodged ticket.

Alternatively, electors can vote below the line but if they choose to do so must place a number in every box in their order of preference to ensure that their vote is formal.

To be elected, candidates need to obtain a quota (or 'proportion') of votes, calculated by dividing the total number of formal votes cast by the number of members to be elected.

PUBLICATION OF CAMPAIGN MATERIAL

All campaign literature published during the election period is required to contain the name and physical address of the person authorising the material. Based on judicial precedent, the Commission dates the commencement of the election period from the issue of the writ (1 February 2017).

Although candidates often complain that material published by a rival candidate is 'misleading', the Electoral Act specifically refers to misleading an elector 'in relation to the casting of the elector's vote' (for example, depicting a ballot paper in an incorrect way that might mislead electors). There is ample judicial precedent that the offence of 'misleading electors' does not relate to the accuracy or otherwise of policy statements or criticisms made of another candidate's policies. Electors need to make their own judgements about the substance of policy statements made by candidates or political parties in the course of a campaign.

Given the Commission's impartiality, where complaints are received we are necessarily cautious about making public comment that might be construed as commentary on a particular candidate or party. Please understand that often the only appropriate comment is 'no comment'.

SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE ELECTION

- Over 1.6 million electors are enrolled to vote.
- To allow for electors voting outside of their district, over seven million ballot papers will be printed.
- On Election Day there will be approximately 1105 polling places open throughout Western Australia. In addition 44 early voting centres will operate, generally between Monday 20 February and Friday 10 March.
- On Election Day itself the Commission becomes one of WA's biggest employers, with around 8,000 people working in polling places that day. Bearing in mind that for many Election Day is their first and only day on the job, training and coordinating such a large number of temporary staff is a significant logistical challenge.
- Voting instructions in polling places will be available in 26 different languages.
- The Commission will produce an estimated 35 - 45 tonnes of (recyclable) cardboard election material such as ballot boxes and voting screens.

The smallest electoral district for the Legislative Assembly is Mount Lawley with an area of 18 square kilometres, the largest North West Central at 817,000.

2017 WA State General Election Timeline

Issue of the writs	Wednesday 1 February 2017
Nominations open	Thursday 2 February 2017
Applications for postal votes open	Thursday 2 February 2017
Close of party nominations	Thursday 9 February 2017
Roll close	Thursday 9 February 2017
Close of nominations	Friday 10 February 2017 (12 pm)
Draw for ballot paper positions	Friday 10 February 2017
Voting ticket lodgement	Monday 13 February 2017 (12 pm)
Early voting commences	Monday 20 February 2017
Postal voting commences	Monday 20 February 2017
Mobile polling commences	Saturday 25 February 2017
Scrutiny of early votes may commence	Wednesday 8 March 2017 (8 am)
Postal vote applications close	Wednesday 8 March 2017 (6 pm)
Early voting closes	10 March 2017 (6 pm)
Polling day	Saturday March 11 2017 (8 am–6 pm)
Close of receipt of postal votes	Thursday 16 March 2017 (9 am)
Last date for return of the writs	Tuesday 2 May 2017