

# KEY MESSAGING

## 2022 federal election telephone voting system

*Last updated 28 March 2022 – will be updated progressively as more details are confirmed*

### About the telephone voting service

- We know that some people will be in isolation or quarantine under a public health order during the election and will not be able to vote in person.
- People can check if they are eligible to vote early if they don't think they can make it to a polling place on election day. Eligible people can:
  - vote at one of our early voting centres, or
  - apply for a postal vote by visiting [aec.gov.au](http://aec.gov.au). Postal voting applications close at 6pm the Wednesday before election day.
- The AEC may establish a telephone voting service if it's required, after applications for postal voting close for people who are unable to vote in person due to COVID-19.

### Who can use the service

- People directed to isolate or quarantine under a public health order may be eligible to register to vote by phone after 6pm the Wednesday before election day up until 2pm (TBC) on election day.
  - This expanded telephone voting service is an emergency measure for the 2022 federal election.
  - Voters accessing the telephone voting service should be prepared for potentially long wait times.
  - Voters will need to make a declaration and provide evidence of their eligibility for telephone voting due to COVID-19.
  - Exact eligibility criteria for the service will be made available soon.

### Safety and privacy

- Integrity is a core AEC value ingrained into all aspects of our operation. The telephone voting service is no different. Personal details are only used to register as an eligible voter. Our voter registration systems are designed to protect personal details and have been independently assessed for security compliance.
- Telephone voting will involve a two-step process to ensure anonymity of voters and the secrecy of the vote.
  - Voters will register, provide a PIN and receive a voting registration number. This will de-identify the voter and ensure confidentiality of votes.
  - Voters then call the telephone service to vote.
  - Voters must provide the PIN and registration number before they can vote. Votes remain secret because the AEC voting assistant will not know the voter's name and address.

### **Ballot paper security**

- The AEC's Ballot Paper Principles apply, and ballot paper security arrangements will be consistent with other polling places.
- A Quality Assurance framework will be in place to ensure procedural integrity.
- All call centre staff will have to declare political neutrality.
- The AEC systems used for registration have had all appropriate cyber security assessments.
- The electoral roll is checked for instances of prior voting in the election when they register and again when they call to vote. No-one will be able to cast a vote by telephone if they have already been marked as voting.

### **AEC experience in telephone voting**

- Telephone voting is a service that the AEC has operated previously for Australian voters who are blind or have low vision.
- The telephone voting service for COVID-affected electors is based on these existing services and has been adapted for scale and eligibility requirements.
- The telephone voting service for voters who are blind or have low vision and voters in Antarctica will operate separately and will not be affected by the expanded service for voters affected by COVID-19.

### **Scrutineering and the telephone voting service**

- A process will be available for scrutineers.
- Scrutineering is a fundamental part of the delivery of Australian federal elections. This is being planned as part of the scaling up of the telephone voting service for this once-in-a-generation pandemic federal election.

### **More information**

- More information will be made available to eligible people ahead of the telephone voting period.
- Information on other ways to vote are at [aec.gov.au](http://aec.gov.au)

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## **Is this a form of online voting?**

No. Legislation does not currently allow for any form of online voting. The only part of this process to take place online is a registration option. Each vote call results in a physical ballot paper being filled in and counted in the same way as all other ballot papers.

## **What's the process to ensure the vote is taken correctly by the call centre operators?**

The call centre operator reads back the preferences to the voter once finished, and voters can request for a different operator to do this. All operators will be required to declare political neutrality.

## **What if the call wait times are longer than people are willing to wait?**

Voting is compulsory, however voters with a valid and sufficient reason for not voting will not be fined. Voters in this situation can tell us why they cannot vote via email (TBC).

Voters in the telephone queue at 6pm local time will still be able to cast their vote, similar to the queue at in person polling places.

## **How is the AEC ensuring my COVID-19 information is protected?**

Voters' COVID-19 health information is needed to determine eligibility for telephone voting under the relevant laws including the *Electoral Legislation Amendment (COVID Enfranchisement) Bill 2022*.

The AEC adheres to the Privacy Act and Australian Privacy Principles to ensure personal information is protected. This includes the conduct of a third-party privacy impact assessment.