The Electoral Commission

Postal vote opening procedure

Stage 1.

Open the Postal Voters' Ballot box



Count and record the number of covering envelopes (envelopes 'B'1)



Open the covering envelopes (envelopes 'B') and remove the postal voting statement and ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A')



Mark all returned postal vote statements on the postal/postal proxy list to show it is returned²



Not all parts of the postal vote returned?

Mark the envelope 'provisionally rejected', attach contents and add to the rejected votes packet. Add to the lists as appropriate:

- the list of ballot papers received without a valid (or any) postal voting statement
- the list of ballot paper numbers of postal voting statements received without a ballot paper

See Stage 4.

Stage 2.

Verify the personal identifiers on the returned postal voting statements



Separate the ballot paper envelopes from the postal voting statements and keep both in order



Invalid postal voting statements are rejected. The statements, ballot paper and envelopes are marked 'rejected' and placed in the receptacle for rejected votes.

Postal voters who have been granted a waiver only need to complete their date of birth



Determine those postal voting statements that are missing a date of birth and/or signature or where either/both do not match those held on the identifier record. Adjudicate those and reject where either are not included or you are not satisfied that the statement is duly completed.



Check the number on the postal voting statement matches the number on the ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A'). After matching, package up the postal voting statements and seal the packet.



No match?

Open the envelope. If the ballot paper matches the statement, it is valid and should go in the postal ballot box. Non-matching ones should be provisionally rejected (see below)

- 1. 'Envelopes B' includes where the relevant items are returned other than in the official envelope B
- 2. Regardless of whether it has been duly completed.
- 3. If there is an objection to a rejection by a candidate, election agents or postal voting agent, the postal voting statement must be marked 'rejection objected to'. Accredited observers and representatives of the Commission cannot make objections.

Stage 3.

Opening the postal ballot paper envelopes (envelopes 'A')



Open the ballot paper envelopes (envelopes 'A') and remove the ballot papers, ensuring they are kept face down at all times



No ballot paper inside the envelope?

Mark 'provisionally rejected' and put in the receptacle for rejected ballot paper envelopes. Add to the list of ballot paper numbers of postal voting statements received without a ballot paper



Check the number on the ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A') against the number on the back of the ballot paper



No match?

The ballot paper should be attached to the envelope, marked 'provisionally rejected' and put in the receptacle for rejected votes. Add to both the list of ballot papers received without a valid postal voting statement and the list of ballot paper numbers of postal voting statements received without a ballot paper



Keep the ballot papers face down at all times. Don't look or allow others to look at the votes marked on the ballot papers. Place ballot papers in the postal ballot box or appropriate receptacle and proceed to Stage 5.

Stage 4.

Matching up separated documents



Check the two rejection lists against all ballot papers/postal voting statements that have been returned separately from their corresponding postal voting statement/ballot paper and, if possible, match them up. Record any successful match on the lists.



The two lists must be taken to the final opening of postal votes to carry out any final matching



Place the ballot papers that are no longer to be treated as provisionally rejected in the postal ballot box or appropriate receptacle and place the accompanying postal voting statements in the appropriate receptacle.

Stage 5.

