

## Polling Arrangements

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The AEC undertakes constant election preparations so that it is ready to conduct a federal election whenever it is announced. At the conclusion of one election the AEC reviews the conduct of that event and begins planning and preparing for the next election.

There are, however, a large number of tasks which must be completed before polling day that can only be commenced once the election is announced. These tasks involve organising a large quantity of materials, infrastructure and people all around Australia and overseas.

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## Polling Arrangements

### Printing of Ballot Papers

The AEC commenced printing the ballot papers on the Friday night following the draws for ballot paper positions.

For the 2001 federal election:

- approximately 38.5 million ballot papers were printed
- approximately 348 tonnes of paper were used to print the papers.

The AEC is required to account for every ballot paper from the time they are printed until they are no longer required. Strict security surrounds the printing, handling and storage of ballot papers to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

Camera ready artwork of the ballot papers was produced directly from the AEC's computerised nominations system. The House of Representatives ballot papers were produced in a numbered cheque-book style pad which enabled easier handling and enhanced accountability.

In the week beginning 22 October 2001, ballot papers were distributed to the 150 AEC Divisional Offices around Australia.

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On receipt of the ballot papers, the DROs counted them and securely stored the majority in readiness for polling day. A number of the ballot papers were to be used before polling day for conducting pre-poll, mobile and postal voting.

The AEC also distributed some 225,500 House of Representatives and some 95,000 Senate ballot papers to 99 Australian embassies, high commissions and consulates, to enable Australians overseas to vote.

The total number of ballot papers printed for each State and Territory is as follows:

State/Territory	Senate	House of Reps
NSW	5,221,100	7,126,300
VIC	4,146,000	6,351,200
QLD	2,841,000	3,927,000
WA	1,602,000	2,007,000
SA	1,325,000	1,865,000
TAS	524,000	435,000
ACT	300,000	288,000
NT	200,000	280,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,159,100</b>	<b>22,279,500</b>

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### Printing of Ballot Papers (continued)

At the 2001 election an automated postal vote system was used for the first time at an election. The system printed an additional 741 000 House of Representatives postal votes and 974 000 Senate postal votes. This new system resulted in increased efficiency in issuing postal votes, cost savings, and better use of AEC resources.

### Training

The AEC requires a large number of trained staff, both permanent and temporary, to assist eligible Australians to cast their vote.

At the announcement of an election each DRO has the responsibility of recruiting and training the polling officials required for their division. Training for polling officials is conducted to ensure that the voting and the scrutiny (the counting of votes) are carried out efficiently and professionally in accordance with the Act.

Over the conduct of numerous elections the AEC has developed and finetuned a training package for polling officials which includes videos, manuals and practical exercises. Some polling officials are also required to attend presentations conducted by the DRO or other AEC staff members. Many election staff have worked at a number of elections building up extensive experience.

At the 2001 election:

- approximately 67,580 temporary staff assisted in the conduct of the election
- 37,500 copies of training videos were produced
- over 75,000 manuals were printed, and
- 1,600 call centre operators were trained to answer inquiries

## Polling Arrangements

### Pre-poll and Postal Voting

To enable as many eligible electors as possible to cast a vote the AEC provided a number of alternative arrangements for voting. Electors unable to vote on polling day were able to cast a vote before polling day at a pre-poll voting centre or could apply to vote by post.

#### Pre-poll voting

For this election 306 pre-poll voting centres were set up:

- in all capital cities
- in major regional centres in each electoral division
- in remote areas of Australia
- at airports around the country for Australians travelling interstate or overseas
- for defence personnel, and
- at special sporting and cultural events

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Party worker handing out 'how-to-vote' pamphlets outside a pre-poll voting centre.

#### Special sporting and cultural events

At the 2001 federal election, there were a number of sporting and cultural events happening on polling day or over the polling weekend. While the message to electors was to 'vote before you go' the AEC did provide additional resources to cater for the electors at many of these events. This included opening additional polling places for both local and interstate electors in the lead up to and on polling day and increasing staffing levels at other polling places.

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## Polling Arrangements

### Special sporting and cultural events (continued)

Some of the events where additional resources were provided included:

- Oran Park Races NSW
- Australia Vs New Zealand cricket test match at the Gabba Qld
- Blues Festival in Bridgetown WA
- Bush Concert in Cania Gorge Qld
- Wine Festival in Margaret River WA
- Banji Festival in Banyo Qld
- The Credit Union Christmas Pageant in Adelaide SA

### Postal voting

Electors who had difficulty getting to a polling place were able to apply for a postal vote. Postal vote application forms were available from AEC Offices and Post Offices. The ballot papers were then sent out by the AEC to the elector at their nominated address anywhere within and outside Australia. Electors voting

by post had to have their completed ballot papers in the mail to the AEC before polling day and under electoral law, the AEC waited up to 13 days after polling day for postal votes to be received.

Electors with a disability, silent electors, prisoners, those in remote areas, and people who have religious objections to attending a polling place on polling day can apply to become a General Postal Voter (GPV). This means that for all future federal elections they will be automatically sent out their ballot papers.

### Overseas Voting

The opportunity for eligible Australians living, working or holidaying overseas to vote in the federal election has become an important part of a federal election.

Australians overseas during the 2001 federal election were able to cast their vote at 99 overseas voting posts in the two weeks leading up to polling day. They had the choice of visiting the nearest Australian embassy, consulate or high commission and voting in person.

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## Polling Arrangements

### Overseas Voting (continued)

At the 2001 federal election:

- there were 99 overseas posts in 74 countries at which Australians could vote
- a total of 63,036 votes were issued overseas, and
- the most votes, 19,166, were issued in London

For a full list of votes issued overseas refer to [Appendix B](#).

### Mobile Polling

AEC mobile polling teams take portable polling places to many electors who are not able to get to a polling place. Mobile polling was carried out around Australia during the 12 days before polling day and on polling day.



**Loading a light aircraft with polling equipment for mobile polling in remote areas of Australia.**

### Hospitals and nursing homes

Mobile polling teams visited selected hospitals and nursing homes to enable patients and residents to cast their vote. The teams provided a personal service by bringing the ballot papers, ballot box and other information to electors who are elderly or unable to leave their beds.

## Polling Arrangements

### Hospitals and nursing homes (continued)

At the 2001 federal election, 1,875 hospitals and nursing homes around Australia were visited by a total of 437 mobile polling teams in the days leading up to and including polling day.



Carer helping nursing home resident place his ballot papers in the ballot box.

### Prisons

Mobile polling teams also visited a small number of prisons and remand centres to take the votes of prisoners serving a sentence of five years or less who were entitled to vote.

At the 2001 federal election, mobile polling teams visited 17 prisons and remand centres in the five days leading up to polling day. The majority of eligible electors serving a prison sentence voted by post.

### Remote mobile polling

Geographic remoteness was no barrier to helping electors cast their vote in the 2001 federal election. Mobile polling teams visited electors living in remote locations in the 12 days leading up to and including polling day.

The AEC used road, air and sea transport to visit Aboriginal communities and their outstations, pastoral properties, small towns, tourist resorts and mine sites. A number of local Aboriginal people were recruited to identify, interpret for and assist with the special needs of Aboriginal electors at many remote mobile polling locations.



## Polling Arrangements

### Remote mobile polling (continued)

At the 2001 election, 47 mobile polling teams visited 343 remote locations in the Northern Territory (division of Lingiari), Western Australia (division of Kalgoorlie), South Australia (divisions of Grey and Wakefield) and Queensland (division of Leichhardt).

In the division of Lingiari:

- 20 teams visited 237 locations in the 12 days before polling day
- teams commenced voting on 29 October at 16 Mile Camp and Tipperary Station
- teams used four wheel drives, fixed wing aircrafts, helicopters and hydrofoils for transport, and
- the teams' routes were replicated on the sub-division areas of the NT Legislative Assembly

In the division of Kalgoorlie (the largest in Australia covering an area of 2,295,354 square kilometres):

- 13 teams visited 51 locations in the 12 days before polling day

- due to its size, remote polling was organised from the division's two permanent offices in Kalgoorlie and Karratha, and
- the teams used planes and four-wheel drives for transport

In the division of Leichhardt:

- 3 mobile teams visited 16 remote locations
- teams used planes, helicopters, water taxis and four-wheel drive vehicles for transport, and
- the teams advertised their visits through posters, in indigenous newspapers, on the radio and sent letters to community leaders

In South Australia:

- 6 teams visited 39 remote locations in the divisions of Grey and Wakefield
- teams used planes and four wheel drive vehicles for transport, and
- polling in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands was severely disrupted due to weather conditions and mechanical problems with the aircraft. The support received from AEC staff in the Northern Territory, the charter of 3 extra aircraft and employment of two additional teams ensured that polling was completed by close of polling on polling day



## Polling Arrangements

### Antarctic Voting

Working and living in one of the most challenging locations in the world did not prevent a group of Australian electors stationed in the Antarctic from voting in the 2001 federal election. A total of 90 eligible electors were living at Australia's Antarctic research bases at Mawson, Casey and Davis and on sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island during the election.

Ballot papers were faxed to Antarctica by the AEC's Hobart office. At each base an Antarctic Returning Officer was appointed from the staff and polling could take place at any time once the materials were received at the bases.

After the close of polls each Antarctic Returning Officer phoned the results through to the AEC's Hobart office. Their votes were transcribed onto normal ballot papers and despatched to the electors' home divisions. The originals filled out by Antarctic electors were packaged up and returned to Hobart on the first available supply ship.

Voting is not compulsory for Antarctic electors as the secrecy of the vote cannot be assured, because of the process used to

transmit the results. At this election, 88 votes were recorded in the Antarctic, compared with 103 in 1998. The drop in numbers was due to the fact only wintering staff were at the bases.



**The polling place Officer-in-Charge (right) sets up his polling place with some help. The polling place set up is usually done on the Friday evening prior to polling day.**

## Polling Arrangements

### Infrastructure Logistics

Number of ordinary polling places	7,703
Number of mobile teams who visited special hospitals	437
<i>Number of locations visited</i>	1,875
Number of mobile teams who visited remote outback locations	47
<i>Number of locations visited</i>	343
Number of mobile teams who visited prisons	17
<i>Number of locations visited</i>	17
Number of pre-poll voting centres	306
Number of overseas polling places	99



**Remote mobile polling in the Northern Territory.**

### Voting Equipment

A large amount of cardboard equipment and paper materials are produced for each federal election. Whenever possible, over the past decade the AEC has used cardboard and paper equipment manufactured from recycled materials and that are in turn recyclable or reuseable.

At the 2001 federal election over 180 000 separate pieces of equipment were produced. This equipment included:

#### Cardboard equipment

Ballot boxes	35,634
Voting screens	119,911
Queuing signs	7,916
Litter bins	11,619
Tables	5,936

#### Paper materials

Postal vote envelopes	821,235
Declaration vote envelopes	3,500,000