

Scrutiny After Election Night

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The initial counting of the votes conducted on election night is followed by a 'fresh scrutiny' of both House of Representatives and Senate ballot papers. This fresh scrutiny is conducted by the DRO and commences on the Monday after polling day in Divisional Offices.

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Fresh Scrutiny of Ordinary Votes

The DRO counts all ordinary votes received from every polling place in their division. Some ballot papers which were treated as informal on polling night may be admitted to the count by the DRO, and similarly any ballots previously regarded as formal may be reclassified as informal.

Declaration Vote Scrutiny

The preliminary scrutiny of postal and pre-poll votes began from the Monday before polling day. The preliminary scrutiny of absent and provisional votes began on the Monday after polling day. A postal vote will be accepted for further scrutiny if the DRO is satisfied that the elector is enrolled (or is entitled to be enrolled) for the division; their signature on the postal vote certificate is genuine and properly witnessed; and the vote contained in the envelope was recorded prior to the close of the poll.

A pre-poll, absent or provisional vote will be accepted for further scrutiny if the DRO is satisfied that the elector is enrolled (or entitled to be enrolled) for the division; and that the

certificate or declaration has been properly signed and witnessed.

The AEC must wait 13 days after polling day to receive postal votes before it can finalise counting. This ensures that electors in remote areas and overseas are not disenfranchised.

Further scrutiny

Once a postal, pre-poll, absent or provisional vote is admitted to the further scrutiny, the envelope is opened and the ballot paper is taken out, without being unfolded, and is placed in the ballot box. It is then treated in the same way as an ordinary ballot paper. Further scrutiny for postal and pre-poll votes cannot commence until the Monday after polling day.

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Computerised Senate Scrutiny

The Senate scrutiny treats ballot papers marked above the line separately from ballot papers marked below the line. The Senate ballot papers marked above the line are manually counted in the Divisional Office and the first preference figures for each party and group are tallied.

The ballot papers marked below the line are forwarded progressively to a central scrutiny centre in each capital city where the computerised scrutiny takes place.

The below the line preferences of each ballot paper are entered into a computer. The above the line totals for each party and group are then entered into the computer which has been programmed to distribute the preferences according to the group voting tickets lodged with the AEC.

The above the line and below the line votes are then combined by the computer which calculates the quota, distributes preferences and produces the result of the Senate election.

Scanning

After the election all the Certified Lists are electronically scanned to identify apparent non-voters and possible multiple voters.

The scanners identify from the Certified Lists:

- whether or not a voter's name has been marked off
- the name of the polling place and the issuing point at which the voter's name was marked, and
- any voters against whose names more than one mark has been recorded.

Two reports are produced from the scanning results:

- a report providing the names of those electors against whom no mark has been shown. These are identified as apparent non-voters, and
- a report showing the names of voters against whom more than one mark appears. These are identified as apparent multiple voters

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Scanning (continued)

Following identification, DROs write to all these voters seeking details as to why they did not vote or why more than one mark appears against their name on the Certified List.

At the 2001 federal election scanning took place at permanent AEC scanning centres in New South Wales and Queensland and at temporary locations in Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. Tasmanian lists were scanned in Victoria, Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory lists were scanned in New South Wales. Scanning commenced at all sites on 12 November 2001.

Declaration of the Polls

Once the votes have been counted and a successful candidate has been determined there is a public declaration of the result of the poll. The declaration of the poll for each seat of the House of Representatives is conducted by the DRO at the place of nomination. The declaration of the Senate election of each State and Territory is conducted by the respective AEO.

The divisions of Grey and Wakefield in South Australia were the first seats declared for the House of Representatives on 16 November 2001 and all seats were declared by 4 December 2001.

The Senate polls were declared between 29 November and 5 December 2001.

Return of the Writs

The writs for an election must be returned within 100 days of their issue. After the Senate polls are declared, the AEO for each State returns the writ for their election endorsed with the names of the successful candidates to the State Governor. The Territory AEOs return their writs to the Governor-General.

For the House of Representatives, the Electoral Commissioner returns the writs for each State and Territory endorsed with the name of each candidate elected for each division in that State or Territory. These writs are returned to the Governor-General.

For the 2001 federal election the writs were required to be returned by Wednesday 16 January 2002. All writs were returned by Friday 7 December 2001.