

Statement of principles governing the conduct of the COVID-19 Queensland General Election

COVID Safe Queensland Election

It is important that all eligible Queenslanders get the opportunity to safely participate in the Queensland General Election scheduled on 31 October 2020.

To ensure this occurs, the Palaszczuk Government has developed a set of Principles to support the Electoral Commission of Queensland in the important work it must undertake to prepare for the election during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

These Principles build on the successful delivery by the Electoral Commission of Queensland of the 2020 Local Government election and State By-Elections.

The COVID-19 Queensland General Election Principles will support the Electoral Commission of Queensland to deliver a safe election during COVID-19.

Guiding Principles

1. It is imperative that Queenslanders have continuity of Government to ensure a comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Voting should occur in the safest, fairest manner possible.
3. Any measures adopted to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic should not unfairly disenfranchise Queenslanders' access to a vote, nor unreasonably limit Queenslanders' ability to vote according to the method of their choice.
4. The Electoral Commission of Queensland will be provided all resources necessary to facilitate a safe and fair election.
5. The Electoral Commission of Queensland should be provided maximum flexibility to respond to emergent public health risks to ensure the safety of voters. This includes being able to make regionally specific decisions, addressing local public health concerns.
6. The Electoral Commission of Queensland should be enabled to seek advice concerning public health risks from the Chief Health Officer, and the Chief Health Officer should be enabled to provide such advice to the Electoral Commission of Queensland upon request or at the Chief Health Officer's own initiative.

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Palaszczuk Government's Commitment to Deliver on the Principles

1. Support the Electoral Commission of Queensland by implementing legislative and regulatory amendments to support various models of conducting the election;
2. Support the Electoral Commission of Queensland by appropriately resourcing all potential models of delivery for the election including –
 - a. purchasing sufficient materials to deliver a full postal vote or a modified model of postal votes delivery, if needed;
 - b. purchasing polling materials for early voting and polling day;
 - c. establishing additional early voting centres;
 - d. operating extended early voting centres hours and days;
 - e. ensuring sufficient staff to manage additional early voting centres and ensuring social distancing and good hygiene;
 - f. delivering expanded telephone voting to select voters; and
 - g. ensuring scrutineers of ballot counts at close of polls on polling day and subsequent counting can be present through initiatives such as live video feeds, screens, social distancing, etc.

These principles will ensure that the Electoral Commission of Queensland has the flexibility to deliver the General Election either:

1. as a normal election with a stand up ballot, postals, telephone and visitor voting.
2. a hybrid model based on the Local Government general election;
3. a Full Postal Ballot across Queensland; or
4. ability to quickly pivot from one model during the election period to another, including extending the polling day in specific areas based on Queensland Health advice; and
5. ensure the necessary scrutiny, integrity and safety for the 2020 State General Election.