Polling Officer

Manual

Contents

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to work as a Polling Officer. You have important roles, both to maintain the public's trust in the integrity and impartiality of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC), and to ensure that you follow the procedures in this booklet. You will see that we've added references to the relevant sections of the *Electoral Act 2004* where a procedure is required by the Act.

On polling day, you will be asked to carry out a variety of duties, such as:

— issuing ordinary votes

— guarding the ballot box

— serving as queue controller

— counting the votes after polling finishes

No set of instructions can deal with every contingency. Always ask your Polling Manager for guidance if something occurs that is not covered by these instructions.

I would ask that you read through this booklet, follow the instructions of your Polling Manager, and treat every voter with respect and courtesy. I hope you find your work on polling day fulfilling, and to see you back at a future election.

Best wishes

Andrew Hawkey
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

Background

Your employment

⏰ Please arrive at your polling place by **7:15am** on polling day, in time for a briefing by your Polling Manager.

🥡 There is not a fixed time for meal breaks for Polling Officers, so consider bringing food and drink for lunch and snacks.

Your payment is not for fixed hours, but rather is a package covering all your duties related to polling, counting the votes and packing polling materials for return to the Returning Officer (RO). Your duties finish when your Polling Manager releases you, which may be as late as 11pm. You will receive a separate payment for completion of the required eLearning.

Please ensure that you remember to vote yourself at some point during the day between 8am and 6pm, if you live in one of the divisions going to election.

Lines of management

The TEC has appointed a RO to manage the election for the division in which your polling place is located. The RO has appointed the Polling Manager of your polling place.

Both the Polling Manager and the RO are responsible to the Electoral Commissioner for the proper conduct of the election.

2 Types of Parliamentary Elections

House of Assembly

The House of Assembly is the lower house of Tasmania's Parliament, and the house in which the government is formed.

There are 25 Members of the House of Assembly, five from each of five divisions. The Members are elected using Tasmania's Hare-Clark system of proportional representation.

The five divisions are identical to the five Commonwealth divisions which each return a single member to the House of Representatives in a Federal Election.

General elections for the House of Assembly are held at least once every four years. The next House of Assembly elections will increase the number of Members to 35, seven for each of the five divisions.

Legislative Council

The Legislative Council is the upper house of Tasmania's Parliament.

There are 15 members of the Legislative Council, each representing one of 15 divisions. The members are elected using the standard Australian preferential voting system.

Legislative Council elections are held on a rotational basis, two elections being conducted in even numbered years, and three in odd numbered years. By-elections may also be held concurrently with the periodic elections. The term of a Legislative Councillor is 6 years.

Electing 2 Houses of Parliament in Tasmania

Roles within the polling place

Polling Manager

The Polling Manager is responsible for the management of the polling place. Any concerns should be referred to the Polling Manager.

Second-in-Charge (2IC)

In larger polling places, a Second-in-Charge (2IC) is appointed to assist the Polling Manager.

Declaration Officers and Information Officers

These Officers provide declaration voting services and answer the more complex questions from voters.

Polling Officer

Polling Officers will be rotated through the following four roles during the day:

Issuing ordinary ballot papers

The Polling Officer's primary role is to find people on the roll, issue them the correct ballot paper, and mark them off the roll. The duties of the issuing officer include:

— Checking the number of ballot papers allocated.

— Keeping the netbook computers and ballot papers secure.

— Issuing the correct ballot paper to the elector and marking the elector off the roll.

— Providing assistance to voters, including handling spoilt ballot papers.

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Guarding the ballot box

Ballot box guards are required to ensure all electors place their ballot paper in the ballot box before exiting the polling place and that no one tampers with the ballot box.

During quiet periods, the ballot box guard is responsible for sharpening pencils in the voting screens and ensuring that the screens are free of litter.

It is the responsibility of the Polling Manager and all Polling Officers to ensure a ballot box guard is supervising the ballot box at all times.

Controlling the queue

As a queue controller, generally, you will direct voters one at a time to ordinary issuing points. Send family members together to one issuing point.

The queue controller should be able to anticipate when an issuing officer is about to be available so that the delay between electors is minimised, particularly when a long queue has developed.

The queue controller should also be on the lookout for voters in the queue with special needs, for example a disability, silent electors, or electors who may want to submit a postal vote, who can be removed from the queue to be attended to immediately.

Assisting with the count

Following the close of the poll all staff assist with the count and the pack up of the polling place.

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Issuing ordinary votes

All electors that are entitled to vote at this election regardless of division, are listed on the election rolls located on the netbooks. Any elector who is found on the netbook can be issued an ordinary vote.

Most votes issued will be for the division in which the polling place is located. These are referred to as *home division* ordinary votes. Votes issued for electors on the election roll for other divisions are referred to as *out of division* ordinary votes.

Electors not on the election roll may be entitled to a declaration vote. Refer the elector to the Polling Manager or 2IC.

Silent Electors will not have an address listed on the election roll. Refer the elector to the Polling Manager or 2IC.

1. Questions to identify an elector   (section 110)

Before issuing a ballot paper, identify the elector by asking the following questions:

- What is your full name?
- Where do you live?
- Have you voted before at **_this_** election?

    If 'Yes', then the elector is not entitled to vote again. (You may need to emphasise the words 'this election' to ensure that the elector understood and their response was accurate.)

    If 'No', they are entitled to vote and can be given a ballot paper.

A Polling Officer may ask other questions for the purposes of positive identification.

Elector cards

For Legislative Council elections, all electors in the divisions going to election are mailed out a brochure and elector card. This card has the elector's name and address and a QR code printed on it. If the elector presents with this card, it must be used to find them on the roll. Further details are provided in Appendix B.

Electors presenting with an elector card must still answer the 3 questions listed above.

2. Find the elector on the netbook computer (3 & 3 rule)

If the elector does not present an elector card, the simplest way to find them is to follow the 3 and 3 rule — enter only the first 3 letters of the elector's family name, then press tab and enter only the first 3 letters of their given name. Further details are provided in Appendix A.

By limiting your search to 3 and 3 you will often avoid misspelling an elector's name and potentially not finding them on the netbook.

Can't find an elector? Make sure you have taken the following steps:

— Selecting the F4 button on the netbook to search all divisions.

— Asking the elector whether they have had a change to any part of their name.

— For uncommon names, ask the elector to spell (or write down) their name to ensure you are searching the correct spelling.

— Surnames with hyphens or apostrophes can be searched for with or without the hyphen or apostrophe. Given names must be exact and must include the hyphen or apostrophe.

— Searching for names with spaces can be done with or without spaces included.

— Searching using either 'mc' or 'mac' will work for all names beginning with 'Mc' or 'Mac'.

— Surnames that include 'St', for example 'St Thomas', must be searched for using the full word 'saint'.

3. Mark off and identify the correct ballot paper   (section 111)

Once you have found the correct elector, mark them off the netbook by pressing F2. Each division going to election will have a different coloured ballot paper. Please take care to issue the correct ballot paper to each voter.


4. Initial and issue the ballot paper   (sections 110 & 112)

Once you have marked the elector off the netbook, make sure you have initialed the circle in the top right-hand corner of the correct division's ballot paper. Bundles of ballot papers **must not** be initialed in advance.

When handing the ballot paper to the elector, ask them to read and follow the instructions on the ballot paper before directing them to an empty voting screen.

You can read the instructions out for the elector, however if you are asked to explain the difference between the instructions **do not** attempt to expand on this, instead call the Polling Manager or 2IC over to assist with the query.
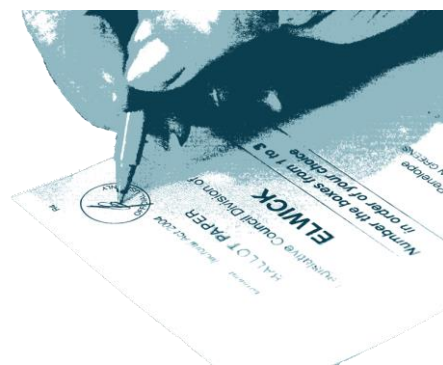
After receiving a ballot paper an elector should:

— go to an unoccupied voting screen,

— mark their vote in private,

— fold the ballot paper and put it in the ballot box, and

— leave the polling place.

Only issue a ballot paper when there is a free voting screen.

Elector questions

If you are asked any questions that you are unable to answer, refer the elector to the Polling Manager or 2IC.

Enrolment updates   (section 33)

If an elector has changed their name or address, they have two options to update this on the electoral roll:

— update their address online at www.aec.gov.au [provide them with the enrolment QR code card to take away]; or

— complete a paper enrolment form [provide them with an enrolment form].

If an elector is provided with an enrolment form, ask them to complete it in pen only, and if possible, collect the completed form from the elector before they leave. This may not be possible if the elector is not carrying sufficient proof of identity (refer to the enrolment form for details). In this case, advise them that the form can be returned to the AEC using the address details on the front of the form.

Spoilt ballot papers   (section 123)

At any time before putting a ballot paper in a ballot box, an elector can ask for a fresh ballot paper if they have spoilt the original.

When asked for a replacement ballot paper:

— fold the ballot paper in half

— write "SPOILT" on the back of the returned ballot paper,

— place it in a 'spoilt or discarded ballot paper envelope',

— complete the details on the front of the envelope and seal it,

— initial the front of a fresh ballot paper and give it to the elector,

— keep the envelope with you to balance ballot papers at the end of the day.

Avoid looking at the front of the spoilt ballot paper, and don't question whether it is actually spoilt.

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Elector Information Reports

If an elector wishes to provide you information about electors unable to vote, or deceased electors, record the information in this booklet. Try and record as much detail as possible.
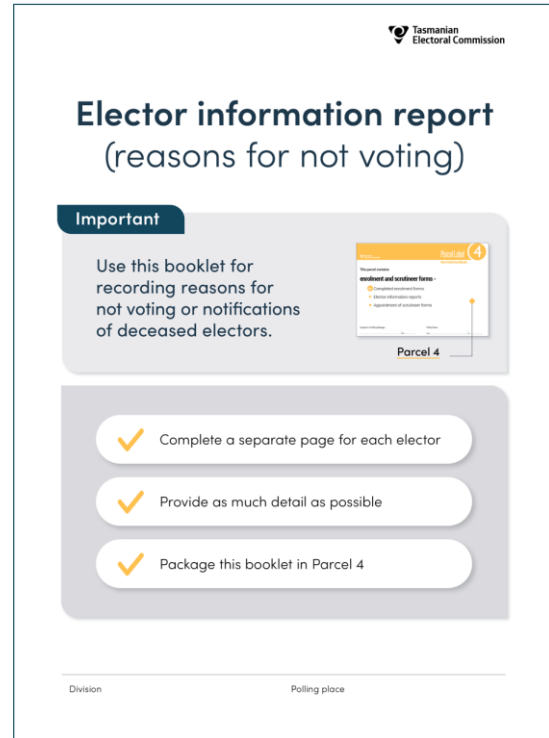
Discarded ballot papers

Staff may find a ballot paper left in the polling place. These *discarded* ballot papers are **not to be placed in the ballot box**. The ballot paper should be taken to the Polling Manager, who will place it in a 'spoilt or discarded ballot paper envelope'. If a ballot paper is placed in a bin, **do not** try to retrieve it. Advise the Polling Manager, who can make a note of it in their Return.

Scrutineers and candidates   (sections 104 – 106)

Scrutineers may be present at a polling place during polling and the count. Scrutineers are the personal representatives of candidates and are entitled to satisfy themselves that the polling and the count are carried out according to law.

Scrutineers are entitled to witness or to question any action of a Polling Officer but **must not handle ballot material under any circumstances**. Questions raised by scrutineers should be referred to the Polling Manager.

Scrutineers at the count may wish to phone early results to candidates or glean information about the likely flow of preferences. They are welcome to do this, provided they do not unreasonably slow the count.

Candidates can only enter a polling place to record their own vote.

Electors who need assistance

The TEC has approved the following methods of assisting electors to vote:

Assistance with filling in a ballot paper

— An elector may nominate another person to help him/her fill in a ballot paper at a polling place if the elector is unable to do so without assistance.

— A Polling Officer may assist an elector with filling in or reading a ballot paper if the elector is unable to do so without assistance.

— The person assisting the elector is to mark the ballot paper in accordance with any directions whether in writing or otherwise presented.

Taking ballot material outside a polling place

— A Polling Manager or 2IC may take ballot material outside a polling place to assist a voter who can come near to a polling place but is unable, due to a disability, to enter the polling place, and

— the elector must be marked off the netbook election roll in the normal fashion, and

— after completion, the ballot paper must be folded in such a way that the vote remains secret and put in a ballot box.

If an elector is to be assisted, a Polling Officer is to advise any scrutineers present of the approved procedure by which the elector is voting. Scrutineers cannot observe the assisted marking of a ballot paper, unless they are chosen by an elector to give that assistance.

Problems with netbook?

Immediately alert your Polling Manager if there are any technical issues with your netbook.

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Declaration votes

Declaration votes are issued by the Polling Manager or 2IC in an area separate from the ordinary issuing point.

If an elector comes to you to vote and:

— you cannot find the elector on the netbook (remember check *all divisions* and for any change of names),

— the elector has already been marked as voted on the netbook, or

— the elector's address is not shown on the roll (a silent elector)

refer the elector to the Polling Manager or 2IC, as they **may** be entitled to a declaration vote.

Silent electors can only vote using a *Silent Elector Envelope,* as you cannot confirm their address.

✉ Postal votes handed in

An elector, or a friend or relative, can deliver a completed postal vote to the polling place. If someone provides you with a postal vote, refer them to the Polling Manager or 2IC.

If the elector wants to be issued an ordinary ballot paper rather than complete a postal vote, which they have brought with them, then refer them to the Polling Manager.

Counting the votes

Close of the poll tasks

There are a range of tasks to be undertaken once the poll has closed. Your Polling Manager will direct and brief you on these tasks.

The major task will be to sort home division ballot papers to candidates. Tasmanian elections have candidate names rotated on the ballot paper, so be careful to sort to the correct candidate.

The sorting process will be done as a production line. Therefore, it is important that you follow the instructions of the Polling Manager, as different staff will be doing different aspects of this process.

Ballot papers are to be unfolded, placed neatly facing the same direction and then remain flat.

Checking the ballot paper is formal   (sections 102 – 103)

At a Legislative Council election, formality depends on the number of candidates:

- — two candidates   ⟶   at least 1 preference marked
- — three candidates   ⟶   at least 2 preferences marked
- — four or more candidates   ⟶   at least 3 preferences marked

In addition, preferences need to be:

- — Numerals
- — No repeated or missed (omitted) numbers up to the minimum number of preferences

Any repetition or omission beyond the minimum number of preferences does not make a ballot paper informal.

If there is any doubt about the formality, or if a scrutineer challenges a paper, refer the ballot paper to the Polling Manager.

Appendix A –
Marking an elector on the netbook

This 'placemat' will be provided for your reference in the polling place:
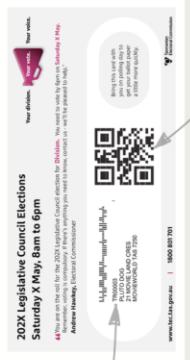
MARKING AN ELECTOR ON THE NETBOOK

ELECTOR CARD

1 Use **webcam** (or barcode **scanner**) to scan QR code

OR

Type the complete elector **roll number.** Press **ENTER**

2 Check the name

NO ELECTOR CARD
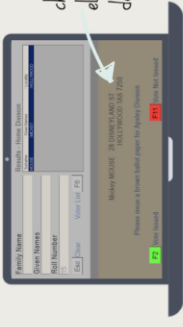
1
- Enter first 3 letters of **family name**
- Press the **TAB** key
- Enter first 3 letters of **given name**

2
- Use the ∧ and ∨ arrow keys to highlight their name
- Press **ENTER** key. This will bring up the elector's full details in the bottom half of the screen

3 Ensure the **address** is correct

check elector details

4 Press **F2** to issue the vote (this will also clear the screen)

Can't find the elector? Turn over

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→ Can't find the elector?

(they might be enrolled in a different division)

· Check that you entered their details correctly

· Press F4 to check all election rolls – this will extend the search to see if the elector is enrolled in another division going to election

· If the elector is enrolled in another division, be careful to issue the correct ballot paper

the colour of the screen
changes to match the division

· To start again, press ESC to clear the search fields

· Ask the elector if they may have had a change of name.

· If you are searching by name, try entering fewer characters (eg. the first 2 letters of the family name and the initial of the given name)

· If the elector still cannot be found, call over the Polling Manager for assistance

→ Chose the wrong elector?

· Press F11 to not issue a vote – this will return you to the list of matched electors to choose another elector

→ Special Names

· Enter St names as SAINT
(eg. ST Hill should be entered as Saint Hill)

→ Roll Number not working?

(If you're having trouble entering the roll number)

· Enter their name instead

February 2021

Appendix B – Using Scanners

Elector cards

For Legislative Council elections, all electors in the divisions going to election are mailed out a brochure and elector card. This card has the elector's name, address and a QR code printed on it. A sample of an elector card is shown below:


Roll number
(next to division code)

QR code

QR code scanning using the netbooks

Use the netbook's webcam to scan the QR code on the elector card. In order for this to work, there should be a little blue light above the screen of the netbook next to the webcam. If the light isn't on, please call over your Polling Manager for assistance.

Scanning a QR code with the webcam can be a little tricky at first, but is easy to do with a bit of practice. Before the polling place opens, the Poling Manager will conduct a training briefing, using a set of training elector cards, with the netbooks in training mode to practice scanning QR codes.

When you get a match, the computer will beep at you, and you should notice that the elector's details appear on screen.

Verify that the name and address on screen matches the elector card and issue them with the correct ballot paper.

blue light indicates webcam is working
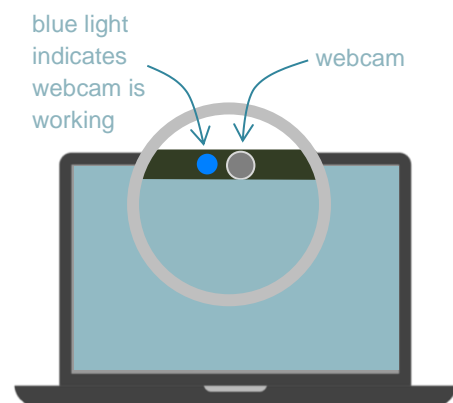
webcam

Some tips –

Hold the elector card on the sides and try to align the QR code with the netbook webcam, holding it at a distance of about 25 centimetres away from the webcam (or about the depth of the netbook). The angle of the card should match the angle of the netbook screen.

During the course of the day, if you can't get a correct match with the QR code after two or three seconds, don't leave the elector waiting, simply enter the elector's roll number.

Always verify that the name and address on screen matches what you see on the elector card.

After you have issued the elector with their ballot paper, keep the elector card unless they ask for it back.

Check elector details
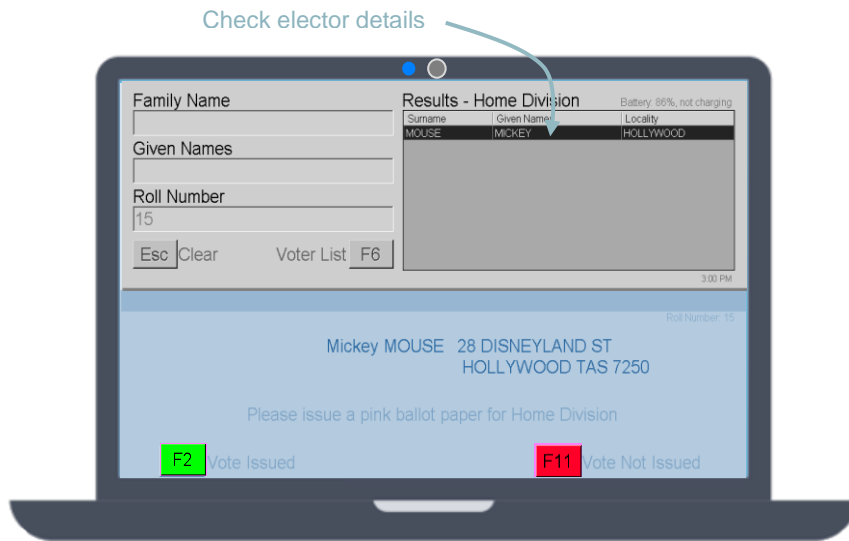
QR code scanning using the barcode scanners

Pre-poll locations, and some polling places may be provided with a handheld barcode scanner (see image below). If you have a barcode scanner attached to your netbook, you will be able to scan the QR code to mark an elector off the roll. Simply hold the barcode scanner approximately 30 centimetres away from the elector card, having it pointed at the QR code.
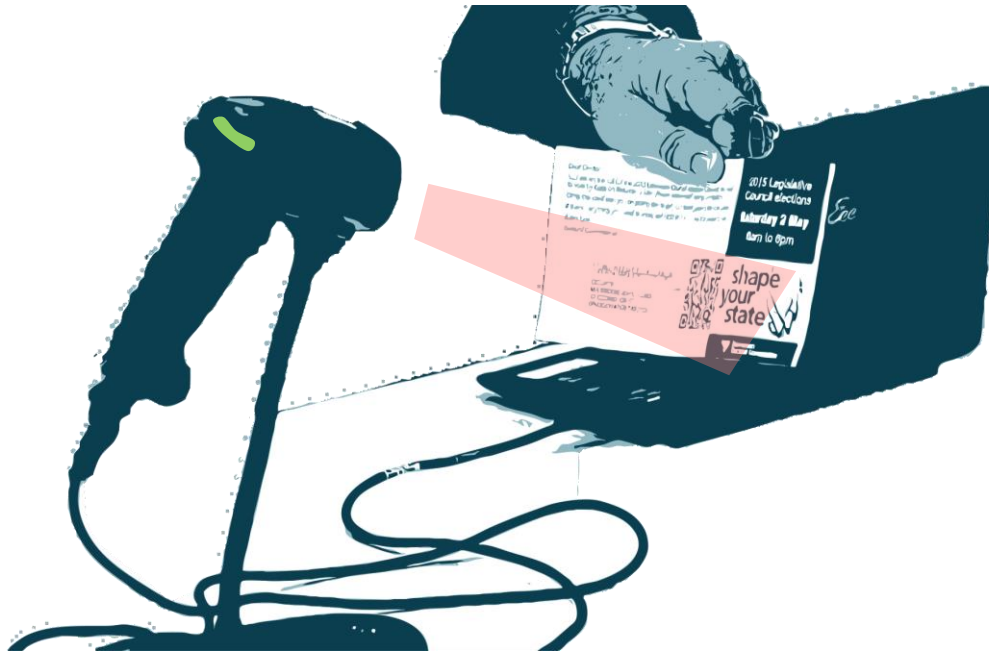
Some tips –

—   While placed in the stand you will see a red light emitting from the scanner;

—   Position the light over the QR code; and

when successful, you should hear an audible beep and a green light appear on the top of the barcode scanner. This should also bring up the correct elector details on screen.

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