

By-elections

A by-election is conducted when the electors in a single federal electoral division vote to elect a new Member of the House of Representatives in the Australian Parliament.

A by-election can occur between federal elections when a vacancy occurs in the House of Representatives because of the death, resignation, absence without leave, expulsion, disqualification or ineligibility of a member. A by-election may also be held when the Court of Disputed Returns declares an election void.

There are a number of similarities between a by-election and a federal election.

The issue of a writ (setting the election timetable) triggers each election process.

It is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 and over to enrol and vote in federal elections and by-elections.

In a federal election, it is compulsory for electors in each of the 150 electorates to vote. Similarly in a by-election, voting is compulsory for all electors who live in the electorate where the by-election is being held.

The people listed on the Commonwealth electoral roll at the close of rolls are eligible to vote in federal elections and by-elections. The enrolment deadline for people enrolling for the first time or re-enrolling, is 8pm on the day of the issue of the writ. For people already enrolled and needing to update their name or address details the close of rolls deadline is 8pm three working days after the issue of the writ.

Election day always takes place on a Saturday. People who can't vote on election day can vote beforehand at an early voting centre or apply for a postal vote. Postal vote application forms are available from AEC offices, Australia Post outlets or the AEC website following the announcement of a federal election, or AEC offices, the AEC website and Australia Post outlets within that electorate for a by-election. Postal votes are delivered following the declaration of candidates and voters must complete their ballot papers and return them to the AEC before election day.

There are also a number of differences between a federal election and a by-election:

By-election	Federal election
Issue of the writ	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Speaker of the House of Representatives issues the writ for the electorate and sets the by-election date. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Governor-General issues writs for each State and Territory covering each of the 150 House of Representatives electorates.

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By-election	Federal election
Voting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ only people enrolled in the electorate where a by-election is being held vote. ▪ electors are only voting in a House of Representatives election. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ people enrolled in each of the 150 electorates Australia-wide are required to vote. ▪ electors are voting in a House of Representatives election and usually also in a half Senate election.
Ballot papers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voters only complete one ballot paper, a green House of Representatives ballot paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voters complete two ballot papers, a green House of Representatives ballot paper and a white Senate ballot paper.
Voting outside electorate on election day	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ electors who will be interstate on election day can vote at any AEC divisional office* prior to election day only, or they may apply for a postal vote or vote early at an early voting centre before they go away. ▪ on election day, there are no facilities for electors outside the electorate to vote. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ electors who will be interstate on election day can vote at AEC divisional offices or early voting centres prior to election day or an interstate voting centre on election day, or they may apply for a postal vote. ▪ electors outside the electorate on election day, but within the same state or territory, can cast an absent vote at any polling place.
Overseas voting arrangements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voters who are overseas can apply to the AEC for a postal vote. Australian diplomatic posts do not provide voting services for by-elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voters who are overseas can vote in person or apply for a postal vote at numerous Australian diplomatic posts around the world. They can also apply direct to the AEC for a postal vote.

* A full list of AEC divisional offices is available on the AEC website.

To find out more about by-elections, visit the AEC website www.aec.gov.au, email info@aec.gov.au or call 13 23 26.