

Prisoner Voting

Can prisoners enrol and vote in federal elections?

If you are serving a sentence of less than three years, serving a sentence of periodic detention, on early release, or on parole you are entitled to enrol and vote if you are an Australian citizen and aged 18 years or older.

If you are serving a sentence of three years or longer you are not entitled to enrol and vote.

Once released from prison, you are entitled to enrol and vote.

Different rules may apply to voting in state and territory and local elections. Contact the state or territory electoral authority for more information.

Which address are prisoners eligible to enrol for?

If you were enrolled when you started serving your sentence of less than three years, and are still currently enrolled, you are entitled to remain on the electoral roll at that address. However you should advise the AEC, in writing, that you are absent from your enrolled address to make sure you are not removed from the roll while you are in prison. Visit the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au or call the AEC on 13 23 26 for the contact details of the AEC divisional office in your electorate.

If you were not enrolled when you started your prison sentence, and you are eligible to enrol, you can enrol at the address where you were eligible to be enrolled before you entered prison (this is usually the address where you were last living). If this is not possible, some other options are available to you, and these are explained on the form. To enrol fill in the 'Electoral enrolment of a prisoner form' (which is available on the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au).

To find out about enrolment, or to check whether you are currently enrolled, call the AEC on 13 23 26 or visit the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au.

If you are eligible to enrol and vote in a federal election, it is compulsory that you do.

How do prisoners vote?

There are two ways as an enrolled prisoner you can vote: by postal vote or by voting in person with a prison mobile polling team.

1. Voting by post

To vote by post, you can apply at any time to become a General Postal Voter (GPV), or you can apply for a postal vote at each election.

GPVs are voters who routinely are not able to attend a polling booth, and prisoners are eligible to become GPVs. If you register as a GPV, you will be automatically sent a postal vote for every election in which you are eligible to vote. To apply to become a GPV fill in the 'Application for Registration as a General Postal Voter' (which is available on the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au).

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To apply for a postal vote for this election only, you can fill in the application form which is available from the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au once the election is announced.

2. Voting in person

During the election some prisons are visited by mobile polling teams where AEC staff set up polling facilities to collect the votes of prisoners. These booths operate in the same way as ordinary polling places with voting screens and ballot boxes. Details of prisons offering mobile polling services can be obtained by calling the AEC on 13 23 26.

What should prisoners do when released?

After being released, you must complete a new enrolment form to advise the AEC of your new address so we can update the electoral roll. You can get an enrolment form at any Australia Post outlet; AEC, Centrelink, ATO or Medicare office; at the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au or by calling 13 23 26.