



Torres Strait
Regional Authority Election

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Election

COVID-19 Work Health Safety Service Plan

Overview

The AEC will implement a number of measures to protect the health of voters and staff at the forthcoming TSRA election in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In accordance with current advice from the Department of Health and the Chief Medical Officer, this document outlines the Work Health Safety (WHS) risk mitigation strategies to be implemented at each stage of the election process.

This document also details [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) and Hygiene Standards](#) and additional [COVID-19 related WHS training](#) that all staff working at the election are required to complete prior to commencing their role.

Nominations

Nominations can be made in person, or by post, email or fax. If nominations are being made in person hand sanitiser will be made available on entry and must be used when handling forms. Passing of forms between people to be kept to a minimum and social distancing of 1.5m will be implemented as per the current [QLD Government Health requirements](#).

Printing ballot papers

Strict hand sanitisation should be used, however, the use of sanitising spray is not permitted on ballot papers due to risk of damage.

Early voting (pre-poll) and Polling Day

A Hygiene Officer (new role) will be allocated to each pre-poll voting centre and static polling place and will report to the Presiding Officer.

The number of voters permitted within polling places will be limited according to the size of the venue which is used for polling as per the current [QLD Government Health requirements](#).

Voters will queue outside of the polling place and maintain a distance of 1.5m between each person. Polling staff will ensure that the number of people inside the polling place at any one time does not exceed the maximum limit.

Hand sanitiser will be provided for voters upon entry to and exit from the polling place. Hand sanitiser will be placed at each ballot paper issuing point for use by issuing officers, and for voters on request.

Light weight protective screens will be placed at each issuing point, where possible.

Voting screens will be set up to ensure physical distancing of 1.5m. Voting screens will be lined with an insert that will be sanitised by the Hygiene Officer regularly with sanitising spray.

Issuing point tables will be spaced out allowing 1.5m distancing and sanitised after a staff change with sanitising spray.

Surgical masks and non-latex gloves will be available where requested. It is a requirement for staff to be trained in the correct use of all PPE.

Voters are encouraged to bring their own pen or pencil, however single use pencils will be available. Pencils will be issued at the ballot paper issuing point and can be kept by the voter or disposed of in the bin near the polling place exit.

Separate bins will be provided on site to dispose of used PPE. This material will be collected and stored throughout the election and returned to Cairns where it will be disposed of in accordance with requirements.

Signage on hygiene and social distancing will be displayed around the polling place.

Touch point cleans will occur each day.

Close of polling

At close of polling, sort and packaging tables will be positioned to allow for social distancing, with staff working from individual tables where possible.

Hand sanitiser will be used when handling ballot boxes and seals.

Scrutineers will be required to adhere to social distancing protocols when observing the opening of ballot boxes and the sort and count process. The number of scrutineers will be restricted in accordance with the social distancing measures as per the current [QLD Government Health requirements](#).

The outside of all containers will be sprayed with sanitiser by scrutiny centre staff regularly. No paperwork or ballot papers within packages will be sprayed.

Scrutiny Centre following Polling Day

A WHS briefing will be provided to all parties attending the scrutiny centre.

The number of persons permitted within the scrutiny centre will be limited according to the size of the area within the venue. The current restrictions as per the current [QLD Government Health requirements](#) will be applied, and will include the number of staff.

Protective measures such as additional tables will be used to separate scrutineers from staff sorting and counting votes. Scrutineers will be provided with training and a briefing on social distancing and hygiene in their role.

Face masks for staff and scrutineers will be available on request. Count tables will be set up to allow staff to maintain distance with scrutineers to observe from a 1.5m distance as per the current [QLD Government Health requirements](#).

Scrutiny centre tables and work areas will be set up to allow for physical distancing to take place.

Hand sanitiser will be provided upon entry to the scrutiny centre, at each sort and count table and at the exit.

Returned ballot paper transport containers and sealed ballot boxes will be sprayed with sanitiser prior to opening.

Touch point cleaning will occur during operational hours for surfaces such as break out areas, bathrooms, tables and the office/processing area.

Masks and non-latex gloves will be available where requested, noting it is a requirement for staff to be trained in the correct use of all PPE. Use of gloves does not negate the need for use of hand sanitiser.

Use of break out areas and facilities will be staggered to allow for social distancing during break times.

Staff undertaking preliminary scrutiny of declaration votes, or processing staffing records must use hand sanitiser regularly and the workspace will be sanitised with each changeover of staff.

During preliminary and further scrutiny, hand sanitiser will be used regularly whenever ballot papers or envelopes are moved between tables.

Hygiene Standards and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Hand sanitiser

Based on advice available from Department of Health's website and the World Health Organization (WHO) alcohol based hand rub/ sanitiser will be used. All polling and scrutiny staff will be trained in the correct use, placement and frequency of hand sanitiser.

Staff who have concerns about their skin can wear gloves noting the same hand sanitising principles apply as if they were not wearing the gloves.

Surface Spray

The AEC will source surface sanitising spray (hypochlorous acid or hydrogen peroxide spray) in line with health advice. Health authorities recommend using a 1000 ppm bleach (sodium hypochlorite) solution to disinfect hard surfaces. For routine workplace cleaning in a non-healthcare workplace, physical cleaning with water and detergent is sufficient. Training will be provided in regards to the correct and safe use of cleaning products.

Cleaning

Touch point cleaning will occur prior to opening the polling place, throughout each day of polling, and after polling has closed.

Perspex screens

The AEC will source protective screens that will be used at each issuing point (unless impractical due to local conditions). The setup of the screens will be done in a way that avoids twisting by offsetting the protective screens.

Surgical face masks

The AEC will source single use surgical masks with a minimum level 1 barrier for standard respiratory protection as recommended by Department of Health. Australian Standard (AS 4381: 2015 Single use surgical face mask standard) outlines what is required of a mask to meet the requirements of a level 1 barrier. All polling and scrutiny staff are required to be trained in the correct use and disposal of PPE.

Gloves

The AEC will source single use non latex gloves with suitable safety rating for protection against bacteria and viruses. Australian Standard (AS/NZS 2161.2: 1998) outlines the general requirements to all protective gloves. All polling and scrutiny staff are required to be trained in the correct use and disposal of PPE.

Waste disposal

Every polling place and AEC site will be provided with a separate waste receptacle and the staff will be trained in required procedures.

Training

All polling staff will receive additional COVID-19 related WHS training. Face to face training will be conducted with the following measures in place:

- Social distancing rules to be implemented at all times
- Hand sanitiser will be provided and must be used before and after all practical exercises, and
- Cleaning of desks, chairs, touch points and shared equipment must be completed after every training session.

COVID-19 Work Health Safety **Service Plan**

COVID-19 related WHS training will cover:

■ **Current physical distancing measures set by the Government**

The number of voters permitted within polling places will be limited according to the size of the area within the venue which is used for polling. The current restrictions as per the [QLD Government health requirements](#) will be applied, and will include the number of staff.

Voters will queue outside of the polling place and maintain a distance of 1.5m between each person. Staff will also be required to maintain a distance of 1.5m between each person.

■ **Appropriate hygiene practices including regularly washing hands and/or the use of hand sanitiser**

Hand soap will be available in the bathroom and kitchen facilities and staff should wash their hands before, and after breaks, each time they use the bathroom and when hands are dirty.

Hand sanitiser should be applied between every contamination event. Common contamination events include:

- Touching your face
- Coming into physical contact with a voter or staff member

- After every vote issued at the issuing point; and
- After handling ballot papers or envelopes during a scrutiny.

Staff will be educated on contamination events and the frequency of hand washing/use of hand sanitiser. There will be educational posters displayed throughout workplace to remind staff of the proper hygiene etiquette.

- [WHO: How to handwash? With soap and water](#)
 - [WHO: How to handrub? With alcohol-based formulation](#)
 - [Dept. Health: Good Hygiene is in your hands](#)
- ### ■ **The correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including how to correctly fit and dispose of PPE such as surgical face masks and gloves**
- [WHO: How to put on, use, take off and dispose of a mask](#)
 - [Dept. Health: How to fit and remove protective gloves](#)

■ **How to properly sanitise surfaces, including frequency**

Voting screen inserts will be sanitised by the Hygiene Officer regularly with sanitising spray.

Issuing point tables will be sanitised after a staff change with sanitising spray.

Additional Resources

Covid-19 Guidelines

Individual Risk Assessment for Travel to Remote Areas

Individual Risk Assessment for Scrutineers