

Election workforce: being impartial at the AEC - what you need to know

What is political neutrality?

Political neutrality is not expressing an opinion and/or taking actions, in relation to political parties, political candidates and/or their policies.

Why do I need to be politically neutral?

The AEC's role is to deliver the election with the highest levels of integrity and impartiality.

This requires the AEC and its staff, including temporary workers, to be politically neutral.

The AEC places a strong emphasis on political neutrality because it is responsible for providing the Australian people with an independent electoral service.

As a temporary worker, you play an important part in supporting the AEC to perform its role in helping eligible Australians to vote. This includes:

- fostering an inclusive polling place and workforce that fully supports participation in the voting process
- promoting the safety and wellbeing of polling place staff and voters
- ensuring the integrity of the result through AEC processes.

What does it mean for me?

The AEC must maintain strict political neutrality and cannot engage anyone who is, or is seen to be, publicly active in political affairs.

Remaining neutral does not mean temporary workers cannot have a personal view on the election. Rather, it's about making sure we don't let our personal views or opinions influence or be seen to influence the way we perform our job as temporary workers.

This means:

- not allowing your personal view on politics or political parties to influence your decision making or conduct as a temporary election worker
- not publicly expressing an opinion on the election, or saying or doing anything that could be perceived as expressing an opinion (including via personal social media accounts, letters, or emails)
- being diligent with who and what you discuss regarding the election.

What about social media?

When we talk about 'social media,' we mean a wide range of online interactions on many different platforms, including social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Reddit, or professional networking sites like LinkedIn, or video sharing sites and apps like YouTube and TikTok, and includes blogs or online forums. It may also include comments on news articles and in some cases, more seemingly private tools like email.

All AEC employees, including the temporary workforce, must not make public comment on the election or share the knowledge gained of AEC business to comment on any issues. This includes questions about the process, political neutrality, and the impartiality or independence of the AEC.

Off-hand or careless posts on social media can undermine public trust and erode confidence in the AEC and the integrity of the voting process. Your behaviour on social media before you joined the AEC could affect public trust and confidence. It might be a good time to review your online footprint and remove posts that could compromise your neutrality as an AEC employee.

Behaviours may include posting content, uploading pictures or commentary, participating in online petitions or fundraisers, commenting on posts, blogs, Instagram photos or YouTube videos, sharing memes, or just simply 'liking' other people's content. It may also include sending direct or private messages on networking platforms.

It's also important to note that remaining politically neutral applies even if you're using social media anonymously, or under an alias or pseudonym.

For more information on social media in the Australia Public Service visit [Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies | Australian Public Service Commission \(apsc.gov.au\)](https://www.apsc.gov.au/social-media-guidance).

Can I comment on AEC social media posts?

No. Please do not comment on queries directed to the AEC or related to AEC business. The AEC has a dedicated media team that will respond to public comments and queries.

If you come across online disinformation or misinformation about the election you can notify the media team at media@aec.gov.au.

How should I respond to questions about the election?

You could say something like I'm not able to comment because I work for the AEC which is the independent organisation that's running the election. I have to be neutral on politics.

You can also refer them to the AEC website where there is information about the election process.

What should I wear to work at the election

The AEC recommends wearing neat and comfortable clothing that does not have branding that could be perceived to be comprising political neutrality. Consider your choice of clothing and ask yourself how it could be perceived from a political neutrality perspective.

AEC staff must not wear political/campaign messages on badges or clothing when representing the AEC, such as in a polling place.

Do I need to wear AEC identification?

Yes. You must always wear your AEC vest and AEC identification when you are working for the AEC. As a personal safety measure, you must remove your AEC vest or identification outside of AEC sites.

What is the *Acknowledgement and Declaration of Key Obligations (ADKO) for Temporary Election Workers* form?

All AEC staff, both permanent and temporary, are required to complete the ADKO which is a declaration of political neutrality and designed to avoid potential or real conflicts of interest. Being a member of a political party or having a prior party affiliation does not automatically mean you are not able to work for the AEC, but you are required to maintain neutrality and your employment may be terminated if you do not.

When you register to work for the AEC at electoral events, you need to acknowledge your commitment to political neutrality. The Acknowledgement and Declaration of Key Obligations (ADKO) form is a requirement to ensure you understand your obligations.

Supporting your wellbeing

Your safety and wellbeing is important to the AEC.

It is our responsibility to actively build and maintain a safe and respectful environment and help keep each other safe and supported.

In your role you may be required to engage with members of the public who may express differing views or opinions that you find upsetting. Should you experience this while working at the election, speak with your supervisor or contact the divisional office.

For support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you can contact:

- 13YARN (13 92 76) (for First Nations employees)
- Lifeline (13 11 14)
- Telus (1800 318 425). Telus is the AEC's Employee Assistance Program provider for the election. This service is available to for all staff including our temporary workforce.

I still have questions, who can I contact?

If you would like more information or have questions about neutrality or impartiality you can contact the Employ Train Pay (ETP) Helpdesk at employtrainpay@aec.gov.au or on 02 6271 4631.