

Supports available for people with disability

2023 referendum

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Supporting people with disability

More than 4.4 million people in Australia have disability. The Australian Electoral Commission aims to ensure people with disability are not disadvantaged when participating in the electoral system, and that they have full access to the voting process. We achieve this through a range of initiatives, including our accessible communication, enrolment and voting options, and accessibility of polling places.

Accessible enrolment

How people can enrol to vote

Voters with disability can enrol to vote by:

- enrolling online through the AEC's [online enrolment service](#)
- completing a [PDF form](#) available for download from the AEC website
- enrolling on a [paper form](#) (available from the AEC website, any AEC office, or by calling 13 23 26).

AEC is making enrolment easier

Medicare cards as evidence of identity

Following advice from the AEC, the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* was updated in February 2023 to allow a Medicare card to be recognised as a valid form of evidence of identity for enrolment. This supports the electoral participation of people who may not have a driver's licence or passport to use during enrolment as evidence of identity.

Accessibility of online enrolment service

The AEC ensures its digital services are accessible to people with disabilities. Vision Australia has undertaken user acceptance testing and conducted WCAG certification of the online enrolment service. AEC has achieved Level AA accessibility certification, and the service conforms to WCAG2.1 standards

Enrolment for people who are unable to sign their name

Voters who have a disability that prevents them from writing may have someone else complete and sign an 'enrolment form for persons unable to sign their name' on their behalf. A registered medical practitioner must complete and sign the medical certificate on the form. If a voter is unable to attend a polling place, the form also allows them to register as a general postal voter to receive ballot papers in the mail.

Information and education materials

AEC website

The AEC website includes information for people who may require information in alternative or accessible formats. The AEC website is built using a responsive design framework, allowing users to navigate the website on any device. Wherever possible, it is WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliant.

Users who have low vision, low literacy, or who have difficulty reading text online can click the 'Listen' button at the top of each page on the website, which will read out the page content. The page content can be saved as an audio file.

Accessible formats - resources for the referendum

The AEC produces information in accessible and translated formats including:

- [Easy Read guides](#) on the process of a referendum, how to enrol, how to vote and to vote by mail.
- **Auslan** video that explains what to expect at a polling place and how to correctly complete a ballot paper.
- **Videos** on YouTube (youtube.com/aecgovau) and short-form videos released on our social media channels, which are captioned and have transcripts, where possible.
- Products for people who are **blind or have low vision** including the official guide in large print and e-text, MP3 audio files/CD, DAISY and Braille formats.
- **Translated information** in up to 34 CALD and up to 25 First Nations languages.

Referendum Booklet including the Yes/No Pamphlet and AEC Official Guide

The Referendum Booklet includes the Yes | No Pamphlet, which is written by parliamentarians, and the AEC official guide with information on voting services, which is written by the AEC. This booklet has been sent to all Australian households.

Accessible formats for people who are blind or have low vision will be available online in formats including e-Braille, large print and audio file.

CALD and First Nations translations of the referendum booklet will be on the AEC website. An Easy Read version of the official guide will also be available.

Advertising campaign

Voters with disability are supported to vote through the AEC's public information and advertising campaign. This includes information on television, radio, print, digital, social media and cinema, and media engagements. Materials will be available in 32 CALD and up to 25 First Nations languages.

- The referendum advertising campaign will include information to support the electoral participation of people with low vision or low literacy levels.
- The AEC advertises on the Radio Reading Network channels. The network provides a reading service of popular publications throughout Australia. It consists of 19 AM/FM radio services nationally, and 10 digital radio services across Sydney, Darwin, Canberra, Hobart, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide
- Audio ads for each phase of the referendum campaign will run on the network

Accessibility of polling places

Polling place accessibility ratings

Securing polling places is one of the challenges of conducting a referendum or federal election. Despite the complexity, accessibility is one of our key considerations.

Once the referendum date is known, the AEC will arrange over 7,000 polling places across the country on short notice and undertake inspections of venues to assess accessibility. Considerations for selecting polling places include the number of expected voters, demographics, accessibility and availability.

With the scale and complexity of the AEC's temporary polling operations, fully accessible venues are not always possible. Each of the AEC's polling places is given an accessibility rating. This is published on the AEC website and empowers voters to make informed decisions about the most appropriate polling place.

Where possible, polling sites will have:

- a level, firm, obstacle-free path of travel to the polling premise

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- circulation space in the voting area for use by people using mobility devices
- clear directional signage
- access to accessible parking spaces
- easy access to public transport, ideally within 400 metres of bus/train stop or 800 metres to other forms of public transport
- an alternate voting room with adjustable lighting, if possible, to make voting more accessible for people with sensory sensitivity condition
- a rest area between the site boundary and the polling place to support cognitive, sensory and anxiety self-regulation.

We also aim to ensure our internal set up has:

- accessible voting screens placed in line with other voting screens
- two-person tables with accessible voting screens to facilitate assisted voting for people who want to be supported by a family member, friend or carer
- other tables and chairs for seated voting.

Number of polling places with disability access at FE22

Of the 7235 polling places used for the 2022 federal election:

- 1560 polling places, or 21.6 %, were **fully accessible**
- 4509 polling places, or 62.3%, had **assisted access**
- 1166 polling places, or 16.1%, were **not accessible**.

Accessible voting options

Assistance to vote at a polling place

The AEC works hard to ensure every assistance is available to support voters at polling places.

- Voters can ask for help to complete their ballot paper. This can be from a family member, friend, support worker, a scrutineer, a campaign worker or a polling official.
- Where a polling official is assisting a voter, rules apply to ensure transparency, including the option of scrutineers listening to the instructions provided by the polling official.
- Voters may provide written instructions on how they want to complete the ballot paper (for example, a how-to-vote card).
- Polling officials complete training that includes the requirement to offer voters assistance when handing them their ballot papers.

Specific roles have designated requirements in relation to voter assistance and this information is covered in their training. For example, queue controllers pay attention to people in the queue and ensure any elderly or frail voters are escorted to the front of the queue. This training was co-designed with members of the Disability Advisory Committee.

The AEC offers text-to-speech pens and hearing loops within every electoral division nationally, and access to a virtual Auslan interpreting service in every polling place including early voting centres.

Other materials available at polling places to support people with disability include:

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- flipbooks providing easy to understand ballot paper formality instructions in English, and in 34 languages. The flipbooks will include sample ballot papers for both a 'yes' and 'no' vote.
- large posters in English on ballot paper formality including sample ballot papers.

Early voting

Voters who cannot get to a polling place on voting day may be eligible to vote at an early voting centre. You can vote early either in person or by post if on polling day you:

- are outside the electorate where you are enrolled to vote
- are more than 8km from a polling place
- are travelling
- are unable to leave your workplace to vote
- are seriously ill, infirm or due to give birth shortly (or caring for someone who is)
- are a patient in hospital and can't vote at the hospital
- have religious beliefs that prevent you from attending a polling place
- are in prison serving a sentence of less than three years or otherwise detained
- are a silent elector
- have a reasonable fear for your safety or wellbeing.

Alternatives to voting in-person at a polling place

The AEC provides alternative voting options for voters who are unable to attend a polling place.

Telephone voting

Telephone voting is a two-step process for the elector. Secrecy of the ballot and electoral integrity are the key components.

- The elector calls and registers, providing the required personal details to be marked off the electoral roll. The elector is then asked to choose a six-digit PIN number.
- The elector receives an SMS, email or call back from the AEC with an eight-digit telephone voting registration number.
- Once the elector has received their registration number, they call again to cast their vote.
- The elector does not give their name but uses their telephone voting registration number and chosen PIN number. Then the system automatically marks them off the electoral roll, allowing them to vote anonymously.
- This means the AEC voting assistant and the second voting assistant who acts as a witness do not know the personal details of who is calling.
- The AEC voting assistant records the elector's vote. The second witness voting assistant ensures the vote is recorded as per the elector's instructions to ensure accuracy and integrity.
- Once the ballot paper is marked in accordance with the voter's instruction, the voting assistant reads the elector's completed vote back to the elector to ensure the vote has been captured correctly.
- When the elector confirms their vote, the voting assistant places the ballot paper into an envelope that is sealed and then deposited into a secure ballot box.

For information on how you can assist people to vote, both through postal voting and at a polling place/mobile booth, see [factsheet-postal-voting.pdf \(aec.gov.au\)](#)

Postal voting

Voters who are unable to get to a polling place on voting day can apply for a one-off postal vote. Voters can apply using a number of options, including:

- online through the AEC's Online Postal Vote Application service
- by completing a PDF form
- on a paper form (available from the AEC website, an AEC office, or by calling 13 23 26).

Our online postal vote application form conforms to WCAG 2.1 standards, and Vision Australia has undertaken user acceptance testing and WCAG certification.

Voters who need to receive their ballot papers in the mail for all future elections and referendums should apply to become a General Postal Voter.

General Postal Voting

Voters who find it difficult to get to a polling place can apply to become a general postal voter. This means they will automatically receive their ballot papers for all federal elections and referendums in the mail.

Voters are eligible to register if they are:

- enrolled at an address more than 20 km away from a polling place
- a patient at a hospital or nursing home and unable to travel to a polling place
- unable to travel due to being infirm at home
- caring for a seriously ill or infirm person
- serving a prison sentence of less than 3 years
- registered as a silent elector
- unable to attend a polling place due to religious beliefs
- unable to sign your name due to a physical incapacity
- registered as an overseas elector
- a member of the defence force, or a defence civilian serving outside Australia
- an Australian Federal Police officer or staff member serving outside Australia.

An assistant such as a friend or family member can help a person with disability complete the ballot papers and envelope if the voter has difficulty writing.

Mobile voting

AEC mobile polling teams visit many voters who are not able to get to a polling place such as people living in remote areas, residential care and other facilities.

Disability Advisory Committee

The AEC's Disability Advisory Committee promotes greater accessibility, inclusion and participation in the electoral process by people with disability.

The role of the Disability Advisory Committee is to:

- seek feedback from relevant Australian peak disability organisations on the programmes and services that the AEC delivers
- understand new and emerging issues of concern for people with disability
- collaborate with our Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) partners in the delivery of accessible electoral services across jurisdictions
- learn about initiatives being developed in other sectors for people with disability
- promote relevant AEC initiatives to members.

Although the terms of reference require a yearly meeting, the DAC meets 2-3 times per calendar year.

Membership includes:

- Australian Electoral Commission (chair)

Disability peak bodies (members):

- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Blind Citizens Australia
- Deaf Australia
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- Council for Intellectual Disability
- National Disability Insurance Agency
- Vision Australia

Electoral Commission Australia and New Zealand (members):

- New South Wales Electoral Commission
- Victorian Electoral Commission
- Electoral Commission of Queensland
- Western Australian Electoral Commission
- Electoral Commission South Australia
- Tasmanian Electoral Commission
- Elections ACT
- NT Electoral Commission
- New Zealand Electoral Commission

Working for the AEC

The AEC is an inclusive and flexible workplace where our employees' individuality and contributions are valued. We welcome the breadth of knowledge, experience and increased workforce capability that diversity brings, and its ability to support us in becoming a higher performing organisation.

Disability inclusion strategy

The AEC's disability inclusion strategy ensures that in all areas of employment practice and recruitment we meet our obligations to staff members and prospective staff members who have a disability.

Disability contact officer

Our disability contact officer provides employees with disability, their managers and colleagues with a point of contact to access support within the AEC. The officer promotes inclusion and disability confidence within the workplace, connects staff to supports and resources, and assists staff and their managers to understand how to make reasonable workplace adjustments.

Diversity and inclusion network

The Deputy Electoral Commissioner is the AEC's champion for diversity and inclusion. The AEC's diversity and inclusion network assists the diversity champion and executive leadership team ensure that the AEC's diversity and inclusion vision and focus areas and the Australian Public Service Commission led strategies are fully reflected in our internal operations.

Temporary election and referendum workforce

The AEC encourages applications from people with disability for our temporary election and referendum workforces. Training is available in accessible formats. Temporary election and referendum workforce staff are required to view the AEC's Dignified Access to Voting video as part of their election training.

RecruitAbility

The AEC is committed to supporting the employment and career development of people with disability. The AEC participates and provides access to the Australian Public Service (APS) RecruitAbility scheme for all externally advertised vacancies.

RecruitAbility is an affirmative measure that provides for progression of candidates with disability, where the candidate has opted into the scheme, to further stages in the selection process if they have been assessed as meeting the minimum requirements for an advertised role. Merit remains the basis for engagement and promotion.

Contacting the AEC

Voters with disability can contact the AEC via a range of AEC channels:

- Phone
 - within Australia, call 13 23 26
 - from overseas, call +612 6160 2600
- online public enquiry form at aec.gov.au/enquiry
- social media accounts:
 - Twitter via twitter.com/AusElectoralCom
 - Facebook via facebook.com/AusElectoralCom
 - Instagram via instagram.com/AusElectoralCom
- through the National Relay Service for voters who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment:
 - TTY users phone 133 677 then ask for 13 23 26
 - Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 13 23 26
 - Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for 13 23 26.
- through our telephone interpreter service for voters with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:
 - Arabic 1300 720 132
 - Burmese 1300 290 617
 - Chinese Simplified:
 - Cantonese 1300 720 135
 - Mandarin 1300 720 142
 - Chinese Traditional:
 - Cantonese 1300 720 135
 - Mandarin 1300 720 142
 - Croatian 1300 720 136
 - Dari 1300 290 618
 - Farsi (Persian) 1300 290 619
 - Greek 1300 720 137
 - Italian 1300 720 138
 - Khmer 1300 720 134
 - Korean 1300 720 468
 - Macedonian 1300 720 139
 - Polish 1300 720 143
 - Portuguese 1300 720 145
 - Russian 1300 720 146
 - Serbian 1300 720 147
 - Spanish 1300 720 148
 - Turkish 1300 720 149
 - Vietnamese 1300 720 152
 - Voters who require assistance in additional languages can call 1300 720 153.