

Corporate Plan 2023–24

Commissioner's welcome

Welcome to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Corporate Plan 2023–24. This plan outlines the key activities which measure our performance in delivering high integrity electoral services to Australian citizens.



The plan details our operating environment, risk oversight, management, capabilities, and cooperation with our stakeholders; all of which assist us in achieving our purpose to maintain an impartial and independent electoral system for voters.

Electoral event delivery is more complex and unpredictable than ever before, and the AEC is meeting the challenges of this environment by operating in ways beyond the traditional expectations of an electoral administrators with a key focus on actively promoting the positive, trusted reputation of the Australian electoral system. This aligns with the principles of regulator best practice of continuous improvement and building trust.

In this era of heightened use of social media, Australians are regularly bombarded with information from multiple sources. Not all of the information presented to electors through social media regarding Australia's electoral process is factual, and the AEC continues to grapple with the challenges in managing mis and disinformation, whilst still respecting Australians' right to express themselves freely.

Delivering accurate electoral results from operationally excellent events is no longer enough to maintain Australians' trust in democratic processes. The AEC will continue to scan the electoral integrity environment and proactively engage with stakeholders to establish innovative ways to combat current and emerging threats to electoral integrity. There is no single solution to this, and the AEC must continue to evolve and adapt, including through the evolution of our Reputation Management System.

As the AEC prepares to deliver the first referendum in Australia in almost a quarter of a century, we are also progressing several other agency priorities. Not least of which is our undertaking of a once in a generation information technology and communications transformation; with the first tranche of the program expected for delivery in mid-2023. The Election Systems Modernisation program (Indigo) will govern the replacement and modernisation of core election IT systems. Indigo is an agile technology platform that will transform the AEC's delivery of electoral services and ensure ongoing integrity of the electoral system.

The AEC is managing readiness for the referendum and next federal election concurrently. We are in the mobilisation phase of referendum readiness, and as part of this phase, are undertaking readiness checks to ensure all necessary activities are in place to deliver the event. We are also keeping focus on our election

readiness and are now in the 'implement change' stage of our electoral readiness framework, which means we are applying changes based on our lessons learned from the 2022 federal election for future electoral events.

We look forward to implementing the key activities outlined in this plan for the year ahead.

Tom Rogers
Electoral Commissioner

Compliance statement

I, as the accountable authority of the Australian Electoral Commission, present the Corporate Plan 2023–24, which covers the period 2023–27, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

Tom Rogers
Electoral Commissioner

Introduction

This is the AEC's corporate plan for 2023–24 which sets the AEC's strategic direction for the next four years. Here is an outline of the elements in our plan, which work together to deliver our purpose.

Purpose

The AEC is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and an independent statutory authority established under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act).

Our **purpose** is to maintain an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services, and targeted education and public awareness programs.

In line with the Electoral Act, we do this by:

- conducting successful electoral events, including federal elections, by-elections and referendums, and industrial elections and ballots
- ensuring confidence in the Commonwealth Electoral Roll
- regulating political party registrations and financial disclosure
- supporting electoral redistributions
- undertaking public awareness activities.

We also provide a range of electoral information and education programs, both in Australia and in support of Australia's national interests. We measure

performance against our key activities, which outline the distinct or significant work that contributes to achieving our purpose.

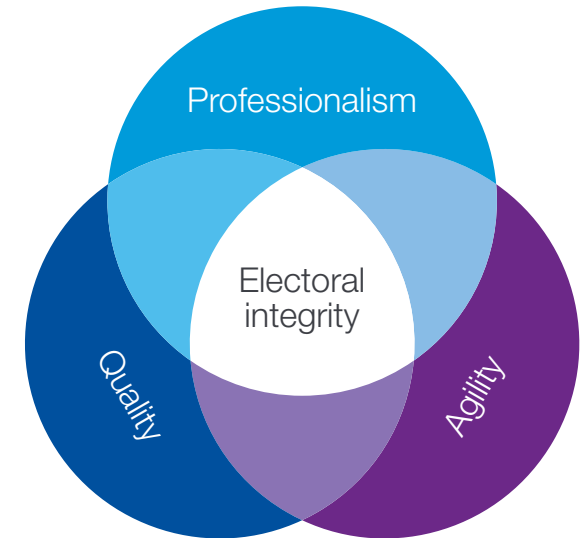
Commission

Section 6 of the Electoral Act establishes a three-person Commission which has exclusive powers, particularly in relation to electoral redistributions, political party registration, and funding and disclosure. The current Commission members are:

- Hon. Justice Susan Kenny AM, Chairperson
- Mr Tom Rogers, Electoral Commissioner
- Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician and non-judicial member.

Vision

We are a leader in refining and delivering best practice in election management.



AEC Values

Key activities

Our performance is measured against our **key activities**:

- 1 maintain the integrity of electoral and regulatory processes
- 2 prepare for and deliver electoral events.

Operating context

Our **operating context** discusses the environment we expect to operate in over the next four years. It outlines how we build our capability, manage our risks, and how we cooperate with others to deliver our purpose.

Performance

Our **corporate plan** fits within the broader Australian Public Service Performance Management Framework required under the PGPA Act. Our performance mirrors the performance measures in the Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS). **In the PBS, the AEC has one outcome: Program 1.1 – To deliver electoral events.**

We report on our performance through our key activities. Our performance against each measure is detailed in pages 14 to 20.





Operating context

Our environment

The Australian Electoral Commission plays a vital role, delivering free and fair electoral events in an increasingly complex environment. With no fixed date for elections, the AEC must be ready to deliver an electoral event at any time.

The AEC conducts federal elections, by-elections, referendums, industrial elections and protected action ballots. We maintain the electoral roll of more than 17 million people, conduct electoral boundary redistributions, manage political party registration, disclosure and compliance, and deliver a range of targeted education and public awareness programs.

Our electoral system is one of the world's most secure and transparent. Research shows that nine out of 10 Australians trust the AEC to deliver elections fairly, impartially and with integrity.

Notwithstanding, trust in public institutions is declining, while Australians' service expectations increase, creating a landscape of deep and unprecedented scrutiny.

To that end, the AEC is committed to ongoing improvement of our services and engagement with users to best understand their needs.

Importantly, this includes a focus on more equity of access to electoral services – particularly for those who may experience barriers to participation.

The AEC undertook a Voter 2030 initiative to consider what elections will look like in the future and, more importantly, what users will expect from the voting experience. The discussions and thoughts generated from this initiative are being integrated into our transformation journey so we can ensure we continue to meet community expectations into the future.

In June 2023, the government passed the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023 bill, triggering the first referendum in Australia in more than two decades. In what is already a complex environment, referendum delivery brings substantial changes and challenges. From the lessons learned from the 2022 federal election the AEC will provide an expanded remote voter service offering and is implementing recent changes to the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984*. These amendments are designed to ensure a consistent voter experience, in line with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

Maintaining the integrity of the electoral roll – and managing the personal information of millions of Australians – is of paramount importance to the AEC. We are acutely aware that a major privacy breach by the AEC may have a significant impact on many individuals. We take all reasonable steps to meet our obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* and to protect the personal information we hold of all voters and others.

Regrettably disinformation, misinformation and malinformation around elections is increasing and is always present. The 2022 federal election marked a distinct and necessary change in the nature of the AEC's approach to reputation management, and led to the development of the AEC's Reputation Management System (RMS). The RMS is designed to be an all-encompassing approach that builds on the numerous operational, electoral integrity and reputation management activities already taking place across the AEC, to further safeguard Australians' trust in the electoral process. The RMS is underpinned by a number of principles, anchored by operational excellence, that together seek to maintain the confidence of the public in electoral outcomes. An important part of the RMS is to debunk misinformation and disinformation about Australia's electoral processes. After all, if the AEC does not communicate facts about the electoral system, others will fill the void.

We continually monitor the external environment to gauge potential consequences for our service delivery to stakeholders. Natural disaster events, labour market conditions or supply chain movements can all have impacts, as well as the ever changing physical and cyber security conditions. We remain prepared to respond to these risks events and ensure safe voting experiences for all voters.

The AEC is a service delivery agency that also has an important regulatory function. We must be rigorous and above reproach in both domains. We provide trusted services to voters as well as candidates. Australians want accountability and assurance about the integrity of the process. The AEC's funding and disclosure program provides this in relation to political finance. Further, the requirement for electoral and referendum advertisements to be authorised ensures voters know who is communicating to them.

Disengagement with democracy has been observed globally. The AEC promotes education and awareness activities, and this work is even more important as we prepare for the first referendum to be held in Australia since 1999. Timely, clear and targeted communication is critical to help voters understand and fulfil their legal right and obligation to vote.

As with every electoral event, the AEC will be impartial throughout the conduct of a referendum.

Our role is to successfully deliver a referendum with the highest levels of integrity and our focus is therefore on the process, not the subject matter. It is crucial that the AEC demonstrates political and issue neutrality at all times.

We collaborate with international partners to strengthen democracy and governance in our region. In partnership with DFAT the AEC plays a key role in supporting good electoral practice and democratic governance in a complex geo-strategic environment.

The AEC is an organisation with continuous improvement at its core. Our modernisation program, currently underway, will transform the engines of democracy by introducing voter-centric, agile technology platforms to replace ageing election delivery and roll management systems. This will enable us to continue to meet voter expectations and respond quickly to changes in our external environment. At the same time, we will ensure the ongoing security and integrity of electoral events in an increasingly complex and unpredictable environment.



The AEC is focused and ready to meet the emerging challenges of today's world. We live by our values of professionalism, agility and quality. We are committed to serving the public and upholding Australian democratic values today and into the future.



Our risk oversight and management

The AEC delivers one of the largest and most complex logistical peacetime events undertaken in Australia. Our ability to manage known risks, and to effectively respond to emerging risks in the evolving global environment, is vitally important.

It is crucial that we meet Australian Government and community expectations to provide a safe environment for the public to enrol and vote, uphold the integrity of our electoral system and remain agile in our approach.

Our risk management framework

We take a whole-of-agency approach to managing risks and, in particular, encourage shared management of risks, both across the AEC and with our many external partners. Our structure provides clear systems of delegated ownership, oversight, escalation and reporting. The AEC's approach addresses strategic, enterprise, project and operational risks.

An important component of the AEC's framework is our risk management policy, which applies to all aspects of our operations. This policy defines:

- the AEC's approach to managing risk, and articulates how this approach supports the agency's objectives and activities
- the principles of the agency's risk appetite and risk tolerance
- key accountabilities and responsibilities for managing and implementing the risk framework.

Our ongoing maturity

The AEC's commitment to maturing our risk management framework and strengthening organisational capability continues.

Our two core strategic risks are:

- the AEC fails to deliver a contemporary service offering and does not meet the expectations of stakeholders
- the AEC is unable to uphold electoral integrity.

The AEC has 12 core enterprise risks. To ensure our ongoing maturity in this space, the AEC is committed to:

- supporting risk-taking within our appetite
- strengthening strategic alignment and risk communication
- promoting learning opportunities to reinforce positive risk behaviour
- sharing good practice and better integrating risks with identified lessons
- bolstering collaboration in managing shared risks, both across the agency and with our external partners
- embedding enterprise risk management with a greater focus on key controls.

Strategic risks

The following table outlines our two strategic risks, their sources and mitigating strategies.

Strategic risk	Source	Mitigating strategies
<p>The AEC fails to deliver a contemporary service offering and does not meet the expectations of stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AEC's ageing systems constrain the organisation's ability to implement a more effective and agile operating model. • Outdated enabling legislation and regulations. • A breakdown in trust of the AEC's impartiality, neutrality, transparency and management of sensitive information. • Shortened or unpredictable electoral cycles that impact on election readiness. • Inability to attract, develop and maintain a highly capable, agile and trusted APS and temporary workforce. • Rapid changes in the delivery environment such as a pandemic, natural disaster or enabling legislation and regulations. • A failure of third-party or government providers supplying products or services. • A failure of shared risks being managed effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We regularly scan the environment to assess the risk context and to detect, prevent and respond to risk. This is supported by a robust governance framework overseeing a range of organisational health factors. • We undertake a continual cycle of improvement and are continuing to invest in developing people. Our people and learning and development strategies are designed to ensure the AEC can attract, develop and retain a talented, agile and professional workforce. • We use lessons management to inform and refine behavioural and business process improvements for future electoral events. • We are agile and flexible, building temporary work units when required to respond to unprecedented events. • The Election Systems Modernisation (Indigo) program governs the replacement and modernisation of core election IT systems. A modernised electoral management system will ensure ongoing integrity of the electoral system.
<p>The AEC is unable to uphold electoral integrity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evolving domestic and global threat environment. • A breakdown in trust of the AEC's impartiality, neutrality, transparency and management of sensitive information. • Disinformation, misinformation or malinformation affects voter access to fact-based information about electoral processes. • The AEC's ageing systems constrain the organisation's ability to prevent security risks and uphold electoral integrity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have adopted a command-and-control model to provide a centrally led, nationally consistent approach to crisis and incident management. • The AEC Disinformation Register is used to publicly highlight the inaccuracy of prominent or potentially harmful pieces of disinformation, misinformation or malinformation relating to the conduct of federal electoral events.

Enterprise risks

The AEC has 12 enterprise risks, outlined below. All AEC enterprise risks have targeted mitigation strategies in place that are managed at senior executive level. Governance committees provide oversight of enterprise risks.



Privacy

Mismanagement of personal information.



Change management

AEC unable to effectively apply and embed change.



Resource management

Failure to use and manage resources in line with AEC priorities, consistent with the Commonwealth Resource Management Framework.



Fraud and corruption

Misuse or theft of Commonwealth resources, release of sensitive information or tampering with records for a benefit.



Regulation/legal compliance

Failure to comply with or enforce legislative and regulatory requirements.



Security

Failure to detect and prevent cyber and physical security threats.



People

Insufficient people capability and capacity to deliver quality agency outcomes in an agile manner to meet stakeholder expectations.



Information management

Governance and management of agency information fails to provide protection or ongoing availability of data and assets.



Workplace health and safety

An avoidable or notifiable incident occurs in an AEC workplace or site that threatens the health, safety or wellbeing of our employees, our visitors and others who work for us.



Service delivery

Failure to effectively and efficiently deliver electoral events and services.



Project management

AEC investments and projects fail to deliver expected benefits within allocated time and budget.



Labour hire

An inability to manage labour hire staff engagements, conduct and terminations across the agency effectively and consistently.

Our capability

In an increasingly complex operating environment, we continue to build our business processes and election delivery model through our lessons management framework.

Our people capability

The AEC's workforce is unique and multi-tiered. Our people include APS employees engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999*, our event surge workforce, statutory appointments, external engagements (labour hire, contractors or consultants), and our very large temporary election workforce engaged under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act).

Collectively, our workforce maintains an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters. It also delivers other electoral, education, regulatory and enabling services. Our workforce – with its unique skills – is critical to the delivery of quality services.

This is achieved through a range of initiatives. Among these is the development and implementation of a strategic workforce plan, building organisational capability and ensuring uptake of early intervention for optimal wellbeing. We will continue to attract and nurture high-performing people and encourage workforce diversity.

Learning and development is an integral part of professionalising our workforce. The AEC is focusing on five key areas:

- organisational capability
- learning culture
- accountabilities and responsibilities
- temporary election workforce
- learning infrastructure.

The AEC's investment in this domain helps build the capability of our people to achieve excellence. As a result, our staff are equipped to adapt to the changing nature of the AEC's work and evolving community expectations. A highly skilled workforce reinforces our reputation as a professional, responsive electoral management body.

Our ICT capability

IT systems

The AEC is undergoing a once in a generation information technology and communications transformation, with the first tranche of the program expected for delivery by the end of 2023.

It is crucial that the AEC operate robust and fit-for-purpose IT platforms. A modernised electoral management system will greatly improve our capacity to deal with the dynamic security risk environment. Among these challenges, we must enhance our ability to detect, prevent and respond to external interference in Australia's elections.

The Election Systems Modernisation program (Indigo) represents a major shift in our approach as we develop a citizen-centric, agile technology platform. This long-term transformation will recalibrate how we provide electoral services and ensure the ongoing integrity and democratic resilience of the electoral system.

We are using this opportunity to look well beyond the next election, and to expand our IT horizon on servicing the future needs of voters.



In 2023–24, Indigo will commence tranche 2. Tranche 2 will focus on mitigating enduring and significant risks to electoral integrity and Australia’s democratic resilience. In addition, it will enhance voter and stakeholder experiences by replacing legacy election management systems with modern and secure technologies.

All Australians will benefit from greater automation, less manual handling, and swifter election results.

Polling place technology

The Australian Government allocated \$24.4 million to the AEC over four years from 2020–21 to expand technology in polling places and to improve services to Australian voters during federal election events. This includes funding to expand the use of Electronic Certified Lists (ECLs) and to develop a digital Officer-In-Charge Return, due for pilot implementation at the 2024/2025 federal election.

ECLs are portable devices – currently laptops – and are used at all mobile and pre-poll voting centres, as well as selected high-volume polling locations on election day.

Polling officials use the ECL to search the list of eligible voters and record electronically when a person is handed a ballot paper. They are also used to print correct ballot papers on-demand.

This investment will enfranchise voters, help prevent multiple voting and enhance election coordination. In addition, the new digital Officer-In-Charge Return will improve polling place management and communications, allowing for centralised visibility and back-end efficiencies.

Our work in this area involves re-designing processes, technology updates and workforce training to support changes to polling place technologies.

AEC Command Centre

Part of the government funding received in 2019–20 was used to develop a new AEC command centre to provide a secure, leading-edge, central point of command. This allowed the AEC to better monitor the 2022 federal election and provide the overarching visibility required during electoral events.

Our broader strategic direction is to modernise and use available tools, data and skills to better manage emerging risks and the changing operating environment. Establishing the command centre aligns with this goal and will help deliver safe and secure elections.

To ensure a nationally consistent approach, we plan to further expand the command centre’s capabilities to provide better connectivity with regional Australia and our remote area mobile polling teams.

Disinformation, misinformation and malinformation

A breakdown in public trust endangers electoral integrity. Everyone involved in the safe delivery of elections must be committed to reducing the footprint and impact of disinformation.

The possible consequences of inaction are serious, including an erosion of public confidence in our governing institutions, and the potential to disenfranchise electors.

In an evolving electoral context (including referendums), threats range from influencing voters before casting their vote to interfering with the mechanics of the

voting process. The possible outcome could be a compromise in our ability to effectively conduct an election with a trusted result.

We are a highly credible source for electoral information, and we educate stakeholders. In particular, we are proactive in countering disinformation across media platforms and other channels. We invest in developing and maintaining productive relationships with online media platforms, working collaboratively to counter disinformation.

The AEC’s Reputation Management System is an ongoing endeavour. We will ensure it remains current to inform the AEC’s efforts to counter disinformation about the electoral process and maintain trust in Australia’s electoral system.

Cyber security

The AEC operates within a heightened global cyber security threat environment. This combines with an evolving electoral landscape where an increasing number of individuals and entities seek to interfere with and disingenuously challenge democratic processes. In such an environment, threat actors may be motivated to attempt to adversely affect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of AEC systems and data. This could include tools and information used in election delivery.

The AEC’s cyber security governance program ensures risks associated with our systems and applications are known and mitigated. We continue to strengthen system security through a variety of measures, including heightened monitoring during electoral events. We engage with key cyber security partners, including the Australian Cyber Security Centre, to ensure the AEC has all available information and resources to support risk-based decision-making.

Our cooperation

External cooperation is critical to ensure the AEC continues to succeed in an evolving environment, delivering safe and effective elections into the future.

Election events in Australia

We partner with a range of public and private entities to deliver Australian electoral events. We also foster collaborations and help others.

To meet the enormous task of conducting a federal election, in all its scale and complexity, the AEC works with many Australian Government agencies, state, territory, local government jurisdictions and external suppliers. Partners helping us deliver increasingly intricate voting options in a safe and secure environment include:

- Commonwealth, state and territory agencies, sharing data and improving the quality of the electoral roll
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics, providing population information used to calculate redistributions and enrolment rates
- Services Australia, helping with remote voter services, expanding enrolment services, and call centre assistance
- the Australian Federal Police, assessing suspected breaches of criminal offences of the Electoral Act and state and territory police forces
- Australia Post, ensuring we can provide a choice of postal and enrolment services
- the Department of Health, and health departments in different jurisdictions, providing support and advice regarding the AEC's COVID-safe measures ahead of electoral events

- the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Austrade, supporting the delivery of voting in many overseas posts.

The Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce helps safeguard against interference that may impact on the safe delivery of electoral events. Potential threats include malicious cyber activity, physical attacks, foreign interference or disinformation about the electoral process. The security and integrity of the electoral system are the AEC's top priorities. We lead this taskforce and co-lead its board, guided by other key agencies across government.

The future of the electoral operating environment will be shaped, in part, by the AEC's close relationship with the Department of Finance. This partnership helps us contribute, when appropriate, to inform electoral policy and legislative reform.

Electoral participation and outreach

The AEC's priorities include supporting electoral participation for all Australians. We seek to engage voters from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, First Nations peoples, people with disability, young people, people experiencing homelessness, and people in prison.

In October 2021, the then government announced additional funding of \$9.4 million to increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australian elections. In October 2022, the government announced funding of \$16.1 million to further enhance programs to enable their enrolment

and participation. The additional funding is delivering an expanded Indigenous engagement program, designed and delivered in partnership with First Nations organisations, other government agencies and communities.

The AEC collaborates with community organisations and other service providers to share electoral information, raise awareness of election processes, and to promote recruitment opportunities. The AEC also works with state and territory electoral commissions, and other government agencies to achieve electoral participation outcomes for communities. The AEC chairs the Disability Advisory Committee, which fosters accessibility, inclusion and participation in the electoral process by people with disability.

The AEC delivers a range of electoral information and education programs, including our National Electoral Education Centre in Canberra, and a new innovative electoral exhibition at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. *Writs to Referendums: Celebrating Australia's unique electoral system* is an interactive public space showcasing Australia's democratic and electoral system and the role of the AEC.

We work with the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand to manage electoral rolls for Commonwealth, state, territory and local government elections. In the spirit of mutual cooperation, the council considers contemporary electoral challenges with a view to improving equity of access for all eligible voters.

Industrial elections and ballots

Through our Industrial Elections and Ballots Program, the AEC is required to conduct elections for office holders of organisations registered with the Fair Work Commission. We also hold protected action ballots, allowing employees to vote on initiating protected industrial action. The elections are primarily conducted by the AEC under the *Fair Work Act 2009* and the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.

The AEC is developing a contemporary end-to-end concept to deliver industrial elections and ballots. We face significant challenges running these events in a complex operating environment. Our focus on service enhancement will involve strong collaboration with registered organisations, the Fair Work Commission and other policy owners in 2023–24.

International engagement

The AEC is internationally known for its support of emerging democracies and for its close collaborations with partner electoral agencies. This reputation enables the Australian Government to include electoral support as a key element of development assistance.

Working alongside the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the AEC partners with election management bodies (EMBs) primarily across the Pacific. We help these EMBs to deliver their elections while we continue to further build their technical capacity. As a development partner, the AEC is recognised globally and its knowledge and experience in election delivery is unrivalled.

By building trust, mutual respect and a shared vision, the AEC promotes peaceful and inclusive societies through sustainable development. Our partners in these bilateral endeavours include EMBs, academic institutions and international development agencies.

AEC activities may include:

- technical assistance
- strategic planning and advice
- training courses
- reviewing and updating policies and manuals
- knowledge exchange programs
- workshops
- designing, printing and supplying electoral materials.

The Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators (PIANZEA) network is an Australian Government-funded electoral support program led by the AEC. The network has helped share programs and resources for more than 25 years to strengthen the capability of Pacific Island EMBs. Through PIANZEA the AEC supports voter registration through the Generic Voter Registration System (GVRS) for a number of Pacific Island nations. Designed and hosted by the AEC, GVRS is a software application that provides users with a technologically appropriate system to manage their electoral rolls. With the support of DFAT the AEC is now upgrading GVRS to meet evolving EMB and user requirements and to make it more sustainable into the future.

The AEC also continues to play an integral role as a founding partner of the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) partnership.

This professional development program is focused on electoral processes and is the only initiative of its type delivered to electoral officials around the world. As well as the AEC, BRIDGE partners are:

- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems
- United Nations Development Programme
- United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

▶ The AEC delivers projects virtually and deploys subject matter experts overseas to advise and help provide quality electoral services.



Our performance

This year we are further improving our performance framework. We have refined our performance into two key agency activities, and provide detailed performance measures and targets.

The AEC's Performance Reporting Framework guides our approach to developing, managing and reporting performance information in line with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). We measure our performance against two key activities and the results we intend to achieve.

The following pages detail our key activities and targets measuring delivery of our success.

Reporting cycles

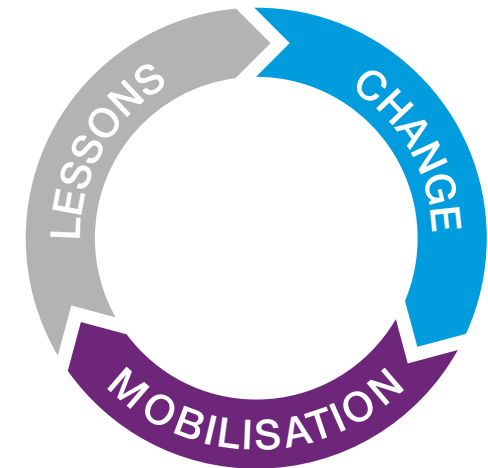
We report our performance through the annual performance statements in our annual reports.

We continue to operate on two reporting cycles.

- Externally on a four-year cycle in line with the PGPA Act
- Internally as part of the electoral cycle focusing on the three phases of election readiness
 - » lessons
 - » implement change
 - » mobilisation.

We must always be ready to deliver an electoral event.

Each phase of the election readiness framework directs our workflow and is reflected in the performance measures for the year. Our 'lessons learned' approach directs a continual cycle of improvement and learning across all aspects of AEC operations. In 2023–24, we move from the 'implement change' to 'mobilise' phase.



Key activity 1

Maintain the integrity of electoral and regulatory processes

An essential feature of Australian democracy is an electoral system that operates with a high level of integrity. The AEC maintains an impartial electoral system and processes for elections, referendums, plebiscites and by-elections in accordance with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984*.

As the Australian Government's independent electoral body, electoral integrity is central to the AEC's values of quality, agility and professionalism. To maintain electoral integrity, the AEC regulates important aspects of the electoral system.

This includes:

- maintaining a complete and accurate Commonwealth Electoral Roll
- driving voter turnout
- supporting electoral redistributions
- registering political parties
- regulating the funding and disclosure scheme for political entities and individuals
- regulating the authorisation of electoral communications.

Our work in this area enables all eligible Australians to enrol, nominate as candidates, vote, and have their votes counted accurately and securely. Voters participate in a free, fair and appropriately regulated electoral system.

Intended result	AEC contributions	Performance measures	Targets				Source	Method and Frequency
			2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27		
1.1 Deliver the franchise – an Australian citizen's right to vote	Maintain impartial and independent enrolment and electoral services and processes that enable voters to participate in electoral events	Percentage of eligible voters enrolled (enrolment rate)	≥ 95%	≥ 95%	≥ 95%	≥ 95%	Electoral roll and Australian Bureau of Statistics population data	Calculated and reported internally monthly and published quarterly on AEC website. Reported annually at the end of each financial year and at close of rolls for a federal electoral event
		Percentage of 18 to 24-year-old Australians enrolled (youth enrolment rate)	≥ 87%	≥ 87%	≥ 87%	≥ 87%	Electoral roll and Australian Bureau of Statistics population data	Calculated monthly and published quarterly on AEC website. Reported annually at the end of each financial year and at close of rolls for a federal electoral event
		Percentage of voters enrolled who turn out to vote at all federal electoral events (turnout rate)	>90% voter turnout rate for elections for the Senate and House of Representatives Where applicable, turnout rate will be reported for by-elections				AEC Tally Room	Number of ballot papers admitted into scrutiny as a proportion of enrolled population

Intended result	AEC contributions	Performance measures	Targets				Source	Method and Frequency
			2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27		
1.1 Deliver the franchise – an Australian citizen’s right to vote	Maintain impartial and independent enrolment and electoral services and processes that enable voters to participate in electoral events	Percentage of votes cast formally for the House of Representatives and Senate at next federal election or at a referendum or for by-elections (if any held)	≥ 90% formality rate				AEC Tally Room	Percentage of formal votes cast as a proportion of all votes cast
	Actively manage the electoral roll throughout the electoral cycle Process enrolments to agreed timeliness and standards and quality assure a representative sample of enrolments for accuracy Support the delivery of state, territory and local electoral events by delivering joint roll services to state and territory electoral commissions	Percentage accuracy of the Commonwealth Electoral Roll at the electoral division-level and individual address-level	≥ 95% and ≥ 90%	≥ 95% and ≥ 90%	≥ 95% and ≥ 90%	≥ 95% and ≥ 90%	The Annual Roll Integrity Review (ARIR) measures the accuracy and integrity of electoral roll data	AEC roll data and other agency data, calculated, compared and publicly published annually at the end of each financial year
	Support the timely conduct of electoral redistributions ensuring, as near as practicable, that each state and territory gains representation in the House of Representatives in proportion to their population	Redistributions determined in accordance with the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i>	All redistributions are determined in accordance with the planned determination date and impacted electors are notified prior to the relevant federal election				Government <i>Gazette</i> and newspaper notices, and the date of letters to electors lodged with Australia Post	For each redistribution, publication of notices and letters to electors comply with requirements in the Electoral Act

Intended result	AEC contributions	Performance measures	Targets				Source	Method and Frequency
			2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27		
1.2 Exercise our regulatory functions	Process political party registrations in accordance with the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i>	The AEC maintains an up-to-date public register of political parties	Compliance with s125(1) of Part XI of the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i>				Electoral Act (s125 (1) of Part XI), AEC funding and disclosure, Client and Return Management system and the AEC website	No identified breaches of s125(1) of Part XI of the Electoral Act
	Regulate the funding and financial disclosure scheme for political parties, entities and individuals with disclosure obligations	Disclosure returns are published and regulated in accordance with the timeframes in the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i> and the <i>Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual returns published on the first working day in February Election and referendum returns published 24 weeks after polling day for each event 				Transparency Register (AEC website)	Annual returns: measured annually Election returns: measured for each electoral event
	Develop education and awareness resources to assist political entities in Part XX of the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i> and Part VIIIA of the <i>Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984</i>	The AEC conducts compliance reviews in line with the approved program	Compliance reviews completed annually compared to the approved program				Compliance reviews (AEC website)	Annually

Key activity 2

Prepare for and deliver electoral events

The AEC delivers federal electoral events, industrial elections, protected action ballots, and Torres Strait Regional Authority elections in accordance with the relevant legislation and rules.

The AEC provides the best possible electoral services and events to stakeholders and the public within a complex environment and in response to increasing community expectations. The AEC must deliver these services and events with the highest degree of integrity, impartiality, and in accordance with legislation. We meet stakeholders' needs and diverse customer service expectations. Electoral services and events must be accessible to all eligible Australians.

The AEC prepares for and delivers electoral events through the Election Readiness Framework. While the AEC works to a three-year electoral cycle, the timing of electoral events is unknown. The AEC must strike a careful balance between the likelihood of an event occurring with the cost and complexity associated with maintaining a readiness posture. Event readiness is also balanced against other agency priorities.

To maintain awareness of electoral matters, the AEC engages with the public and a range of different communities and stakeholders throughout the electoral cycle. At an electoral event, the AEC conducts a national advertising campaign across a range of communication channels and in many Indigenous and major community languages to maximise successful election participation.

Our education and public awareness activities target all eligible voters and consider Australia's diverse population. Information, service tools and strategic partnerships are developed, including for those who may experience some barriers to electoral participation.

The AEC uses a lessons management approach during and following an electoral event to ensure Australians are provided with successful electoral events. Within the bounds of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act), we continue to enhance and modernise our model for delivering electoral events and services.

Building and maintaining a capable and agile organisation and professional workforce is critical to delivering electoral events. To ensure we can respond to changing legislation, policy, community expectations and our environment, we continue to develop our agility and capability. We do this by refining our organisational structure and focusing on key aspects of governance and assurance. We are also investing in and modernising our enrolment and election systems and processes. Our people and learning and development strategies are designed to ensure the AEC can attract, develop and retain a talented, agile and professional workforce. This includes both our regular APS and temporary election workforce, which surges to more than 100,000 employees during a federal election.

Intended result	AEC contributions	Performance measures	Targets				Source	Method and Frequency
			2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27		
2.1 The AEC maintains an appropriate level of electoral event readiness	Using frameworks, the AEC comprehensively prepares for electoral events	AEC-wide readiness achieved by the directed level of electoral event readiness date	Agency-wide readiness meets the directed level of electoral event readiness date				AEC electoral event frameworks	Undertaken as required at key times prior to each electoral event
	Provide timely and accurate electoral information and public awareness products and campaigns to a range of target audiences to support enrolment and participation in electoral events	Deliver public awareness and education products that target all Australian citizens aged 18 years and over	The AEC's public awareness campaign is delivered in accordance with key objectives outlined in the campaign strategy				Campaign evaluation report	Specific communication activities delivered for mainstream and identified special audience groups measured for each federal electoral events
	Further expand our capability to support and train the AEC's temporary election workforce	Percentage of TEW employees completing election training relevant to their role	≥ 95%	≥ 95%	≥ 95%	≥ 95%	AEC Learning Management System	Training completion data measured for each federal electoral event
	Deliver polling services to the public within the parameters and timeframes set in the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i> and the AEC's Event Service Plan Deliver enrolment services to electors in a timely and efficient manner	Voting locations (including early voting centres and polling places) published on the AEC website before polling commences	100% of polling locations are published				AEC Election Management System data AEC website	Publication on the AEC website for each electoral event
	Mature and embed the AEC's lessons management approach and capability Undertake an AEC voter survey following each federal election to inform future planning and delivery of electoral events	Undertake a lessons management approach to delivering electoral events	Agency lessons identified from the previous federal election are to be considered and implemented at the next electoral event				AEC Lessons Management Framework AEC Election Readiness Framework	Agency-wide qualitative analysis undertaken for each election event

Intended result	AEC contributions	Performance measures	Targets				Source	Method and Frequency
			2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27		
2.2 The public and stakeholders have confidence the electoral process is well managed in accordance with legislation or rules	Successfully deliver federal electoral, referendum and by-election events in accordance with legislation	The result – for each event – is delivered in accordance with the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i> or the <i>Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For each event, the writs are issued and returned in accordance with legislative requirements and timeframes The AEC will report on the number of Court of Disputed Returns matters which challenge AEC conduct, and whether these challenges are dismissed or upheld in favour of the AEC 				Electoral Act <i>Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984</i> Electoral Commissioner's advice published on AEC website Outcomes of the Court of Disputed Returns	For each electoral event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writs issued by and returned to the Governor-General or State Governors or the Speaker of the House of Representatives Electoral Commissioner's advice published on the AEC website Advice received from the Court of Disputed Returns
	The AEC meets legislative requirements to conduct electoral events for organisations registered with the Fair Work Commission; and protected action ballots when assigned as the Ballot Agency by the Fair Work Commission Engage with stakeholders to modernise industrial election processes and systems, mature planning and assurance, and detail lessons learned	Industrial election and ballot results are delivered with integrity and withstand scrutiny	The AEC will report on the outcomes and number of events in which the AEC's conduct is challenged before a court	Federal Court outcomes				Federal Court outcomes for the year, as at reporting date

Changes in our performance information since Corporate Plan 2022–23

Following our annual review of performance information, the measures below were refined to demonstrate the AEC's strategies for delivering its key activities.

Amended performance measures (3)

Corporate Plan 2022–23		Corporate Plan 2023–24	
Performance measure	Target	Performance measure	Target
2.1.1 AEC-wide readiness achieved by the Directed Level of Electoral Readiness (DLER) date (federal elections only)	Agency-wide readiness meets the Directed Level of Electoral Readiness (DLER) date (federal elections only)	2.1.1 AEC-wide readiness achieved by the directed level of electoral event readiness date	Agency-wide readiness meets the directed level of electoral event readiness date
4.1.1 Percentage of identified APS and TEW employees that undertake specific training relevant to their role a) Percentage of identified APS employees undertaking specific training relevant to their role b) Percentage of TEW employees completing election training relevant to their role	≥ 95% and ≥ 95%	2.1.3 Percentage of TEW employees completing election training relevant to their role	≥ 95%
2.2.1 The election result – for each event – is delivered in accordance with the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918	a) The writs for a federal election event are issued and returned in accordance with legislative requirements and timeframes b) The AEC will report on the number of Court of Disputed Returns matters which challenge AEC conduct, and whether these challenges are dismissed or upheld in favour of the AEC	2.2.1 The result – for each event – is delivered in accordance with the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 or the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984	a) The writs for federal election, referendum and by-election events are issued and returned in accordance with legislative requirements and timeframes b) The AEC will report on the number of Court of Disputed Returns matters which challenge AEC conduct, and whether these challenges are dismissed or upheld in favour of the AEC

Deleted performance measures (6)

Following our annual review of performance information, the performance measures below were deleted.

Deleted 2022–23 performance measures
2.3.1 Percentage of enrolment transactions lodged online, including through the Online Enrolment Service (OES)
2.3.3 After election night, count information is progressively updated on the AEC website
3.1.3 Deliver electoral participation activities to support AEC priority groups
3.2.1 Deliver education programs to enhance understanding of Australia’s electoral system <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Annual visitors to the National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC)b) Visitor satisfaction rates at the NEECc) Maintain the number of unique views of AEC for Schools websited) Teacher professional learning participant numbers
4.2.1 Increase agency-level governance maturity in the areas of risk management, protective security, privacy and information management <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Risk Managementb) Protective securityc) Privacyd) Information Management
4.3.1 Progress the modernisation of the AEC’s core election and roll management systems

Regulator performance

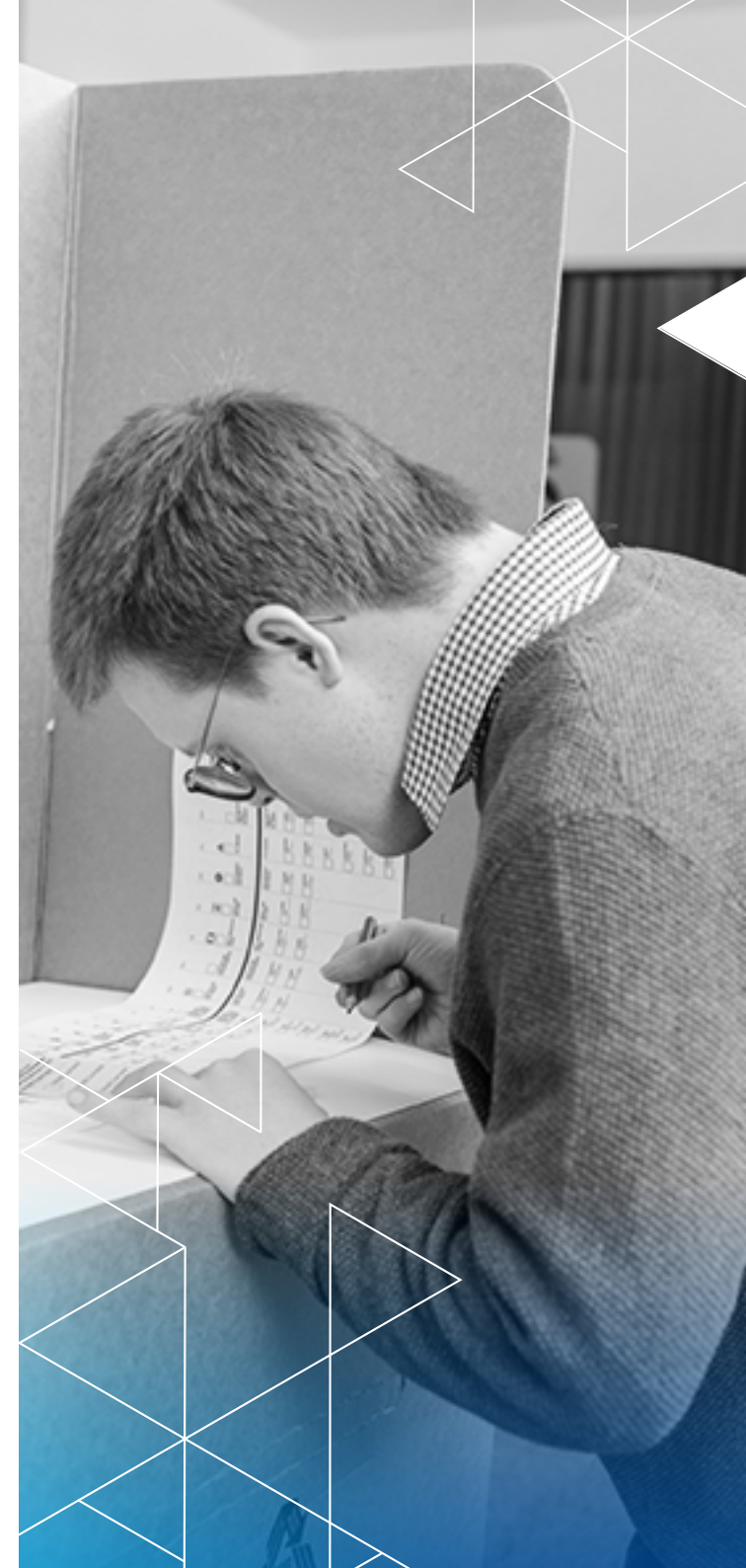
The AEC's regulatory responsibilities under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act) involve administering:

- the Commonwealth funding and disclosure scheme in Part XX of the Electoral Act. This requires candidates, Senate groups, political parties, significant third parties, associated entities, third parties, donors, senators and members of the House of Representatives to lodge election or annual financial disclosure returns with the AEC
- registration of political parties under Part XI of the Electoral Act. The AEC maintains a Register of Political Parties which lists the parties eligible to have the party affiliation of their endorsed candidates printed on ballot papers at a federal election
- authorisation of electoral communications in Part XXA of the Electoral Act.

The AEC applies best practice regulator principles in exercising and assessing these regulatory functions. This is done in line with the Australian Government's commitment to reduce the cost of unnecessary and inefficient regulation imposed on individuals, business and community organisations.

The principles of regulator best practice are:

- continuous improvement and building trust – regulators adopt a whole-of-system perspective, continuously improving their performance, capability and culture to build trust and confidence in Australia's regulatory settings
- risk-based and data-driven – regulators manage risks proportionately and maintain essential safeguards while minimising regulatory burden and leveraging data and digital technology to support those they regulate to comply and grow
- collaboration and engagement – regulators are transparent and responsive communicators, implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way.



The following table outlines our performance against our measures of success.

What we do to meet the best practice principles	Measures	Key activity reference
<p>We understand the operating environment and circumstances of stakeholders and take actions to minimise the potential for unintended negative impacts on them.</p> <p>We provide up-to-date, clear, accessible and concise guidance information, delivered through appropriate channels to the target audience.</p> <p>We apply a risk-based, proportionate approach to compliance obligations, engagement and regulatory enforcement actions.</p> <p>We ensure information requests to the public and stakeholders are tailored and made only when necessary to secure regulatory objectives, and in a way that minimises impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AEC maintains an up-to-date public register of political parties. • We regulate the funding and disclosure scheme, ensuring disclosure returns are published and regulated in accordance with timeframes. • We undertake regular compliance reviews examining a sample of disclosure returns and use a risk-based approach to compliance activity and enforcement of disclosure obligations. The outcomes of compliance activity are published on the AEC's website. • We administer the funding and disclosure scheme, political party registrations and electoral authorisations. We provide guidance and information to ensure stakeholders are aware of the need to comply with electoral legislation as well as the 'how-to'. • We apply a risk-based proportionate response in addressing multiple voting and non-voter prosecutions, and in administering electoral communications requirements. • We continue to improve our risk management maturity to build organisational capability. We are also maturing and embedding our lessons management approach and capability. • We manage feedback and complaints in line with the AEC complaints management policy and seek improvements in administration when relevant. 	<p>1 and 2</p>

