

## Electoral Commissioner

### Senate ballot paper sampling outcomes statement

The Senate ballot paper assurance sampling process was conducted in accordance with section 273AC of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

Based on methodology derived by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Electoral Commissioner arranged for a statistically significant sample of ballot papers to be checked by an independent auditor throughout the live scanning and scrutiny of votes for the Australian Senate elections to assure that the electronic data used in counting the votes reflects the data recorded on the ballot papers. The AEC has previously advised that the exception rate from the 2019 Senate count was below 0.5%. The exception rate for the 2022 federal election is 0.45%.

The audit process confirmed that the highly transparent data capture process is a robust and accurate method which – despite the Senate count being one of the most complex Upper House counts in the world – ensures that a high integrity result is returned within the tight timeframes as required by the writs. The independent assurance process found there was no suggestion of any political or logical bias in the exceptions. Similarly, the process found that exceptions identified did not suggest any systematic basis for including or excluding preferences or ballot papers.

Only 40 variances were observed from the 10,103 ballot papers randomly sampled across all 8 scanning sites for each state and territory. Of those:

- 7 related to the process of scanning a ballot paper, where the nominated image did not exactly reflect the physical ballot paper.
- The remaining issues relate to the interpretation of some of the handwritten numbers on the ballot papers including a judgement of the voter's intent for some of their preferences. Most of these matters resulted from the need for interpretation where voters did not follow numbering instructions (including marking crosses and ticks rather than numerals) or where numbering sequences for some preferences were not clearly written.

In statistical terms, the Electoral Commissioner is therefore 95% confident that for 99.55% (+/- 0.129%) of Australian Senate 2022 ballot papers there was matching electronic data used in counting the votes.

As always, the Senate scanning process, including data entry, for the 2022 federal election was open to candidate-appointed scrutineers throughout the entire process, and a full data set from each of the Senate counts is available on the AEC's website.

Tom Rogers

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