

Enrolling and voting while in prison

It is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 years or over to enrol and vote in federal elections, by-elections, and referendums. If you are serving a full-time prison sentence, you remain entitled to be enrolled. Once enrolled, it is compulsory for all prisoners serving a sentence of less than three years to vote in these types of elections.



Eligibility requirements in state, territory and local government elections may differ to federal electoral events. For more information, please contact your state or territory electoral authority.

Enrolling



Can prisoners be enrolled?

Prisoners must be enrolled and remain enrolled while they are serving a full-time prison sentence. Serving a full-time sentence does not include at home detention, a Community Corrections Order or parole. In those cases, they can enrol and vote as an ordinary elector. Prisoners who are enrolling for the first time once in prison or need to update enrolment details should use the *Enrol to vote or update your details as a prisoner* form.



Do prisoners need to let the AEC know they are in prison?

Yes you can, however, the AEC also receives monthly information from prison authorities. The data includes information on persons serving a sentence and persons who have been released. This ensures people serving a full-time sentence are not removed from the roll.



Which address is a prisoner eligible to enrol for?

Prisoners have several address options for enrolment. These options are included on the *Enrol to vote or update your details as a prisoner* form.

Prisoners who were enrolled prior to serving a sentence, can remain on the electoral roll at the same address whilst in prison.



Can someone help a prisoner to complete their enrolment form?

Yes. Prison staff or visitors (with the permission of the prison) can assist a prisoner complete the enrolment form. However, the prisoner must sign or make their mark on the form.



Who can confirm a prisoners identity if they don't have access to identification?

Prisoners require access to identification if they are enrolling for the first time or changing their enrolment details. If a prisoner does not have access to an Australian drivers licence, Australian passport, Medicare card or Australian citizenship certificate, someone on the electoral roll will need to confirm their identity.

If a staff member or another prisoner is on the electoral roll, they can complete the evidence of identity section on the enrolment form.

The person who confirms the prisoner's identity is required to provide an address and phone number to assist the AEC to confirm the person is on the electoral roll. The prisoner will be able to see this information. Prison staff can put the correctional facility's address and phone number.



What should prisoners do when released?

Once a prisoner has been released from prison, they should let the AEC know and can update their details online at aec.gov.au or at any AEC office.

Voting



Can prisoners vote in by-elections, federal elections, and referendums?

Yes. If a prisoner is serving a full-time sentence of less than three years, it is compulsory to vote in a by-election, federal election and referendum.

Prisoners serving a sentence of three years or longer cannot vote until after they have been released from prison.



How do prisoners vote?

Eligible prisoners can vote in-person with AEC staff if a mobile polling team is visiting the facility. Ask prison staff if this is occurring at the facility.

If a mobile polling team is not visiting during an electoral event, prisoners will need to vote by mail. Prisoners can register to be a General Postal Voter and automatically receive ballot papers in the post or can apply for a single event postal vote once an election has been announced.

Prisoners can register as a General Postal Voter through the *Enrol to vote or update your details as a prisoner* form. For single event postal voting, prisoners will need to complete a *Postal Vote Application* form once an electoral event has been called.

Instructions on how to complete your ballot papers are included in your postal voting pack. Correspondence between prisoners and the AEC is exempt mail.

Further details on the postal voting process are outlined in the **Factsheet – Postal Voting**.



Can someone help a prisoner complete their postal vote application form?

Yes. Prison staff or visitors (with the permission of the prison) can assist prisoners to complete an application form. However, prisoners must sign or make their mark on the form.



Can someone help a prisoner complete their ballot papers?

Prisoners can ask anyone, other than a candidate, for assistance. Assistance can include reading the voting materials and explaining the process. Assistance can also include completing the ballot papers on behalf of the prisoner. However, the person must complete the ballot papers as instructed by the prisoner and must not influence the vote.

Prison staff are able to provide assistance if asked by the prisoner.