

Changes to the way Declaration Votes are handled

Background

- As a consequence of the changes to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* passed on 18 March 2016, the Australian Electoral Commission has changed the way it handles declaration votes.
- Declaration-vote ballot boxes are not opened and reconciled at the polling place. They remain sealed for transport to a divisional outposted centre. They are stored securely until they are opened, reconciled and distributed.

Polling Place

- Declaration votes are placed in moulded plastic ballot boxes sealed with wire seals.
- Unopened declaration-vote ballot boxes are transported to divisional outposted centres.
- Postal and pre-poll declaration votes go directly to the divisional outposted centres.

Divisional Outposted Centres

- Declaration vote ballot boxes are stored with other ballot papers in the secure ballot paper storage zone.
- Declaration-vote ballot boxes are opened and the declaration-vote envelopes reconciled to counterfoils and other polling place records in preparation for the declaration-vote exchange (for votes cast for other divisions) or for preliminary scrutiny (for home division votes).

Declaration Vote Scrutiny

- The preliminary scrutiny of declaration votes determines voter entitlement and eligibility based on the information provided by voters on the declaration vote envelope. The declaration vote envelopes are not opened as part of this.
- Scrutineers can observe the preliminary scrutiny process and challenge AEC staff decisions on voter entitlement and eligibility.
- Declaration votes that pass the voter entitlement and eligibility checks are opened and the ballot papers placed into ballot boxes for further scrutiny.
- Scrutineers can observe the further scrutiny.

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