

Senate Count

after 6pm on election day

Background

Recent amendments to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) change the way voters complete their Senate ballot paper and the practical arrangements for the way Senate ballot papers are counted.

The differences for the Senate count are around the initial sorting of ballot papers, the location of the scrutiny and the point at which formality decisions are made.

New Process

Polling places on election day

After 6pm on election day, the first count of ordinary Senate ballot papers is conducted at all polling places. Ballot papers are sorted and counted by first preference only, by group above the line (ATL) and below the line (BTL) and to ungrouped candidates BTL. Obviously informal ballot papers (those that are blank, indicate more than one first preference or do not indicate a first preference for any candidate) are bundled separately. This is not a scrutiny, but an initial sort of ballot papers to provide indicative results, which are posted to the Tally Room. The count is supervised by the officer in charge of each polling place.

Ballot papers are packaged and transported to the divisional outposted centres for secure storage on election night.

Mobile and pre-polling ballot papers

Mobile and pre-poll ballot boxes are returned to the divisional outposted centre, where counts are supervised by the Divisional Returning Officer (DRO).

After 6pm on election day, mobile polling ballot papers are sorted and counted and result slips completed. Pre-poll ordinary House of Representatives ballot papers are also counted after 6pm on election day.

Pre-poll ordinary Senate ballot papers are sorted and counted by first preference from the Monday following election day.

Divisional Outposted Centres after election day

The Senate ballot papers transported from polling places are reconciled, repackaged and despatched to the Central Senate Scrutiny (CSS) for the state or territory.

This is called the DRO Senate Count. The process for conducting a DRO Senate Count varies depending on the type of Senate ballot paper being counted i.e. pre-poll ordinary, mobile/remote mobile polling ordinary and declaration vote.

All issued Senate ballot papers, including the obviously informal, are then packaged and despatched to the CSS for scrutiny.

Central Senate Scrutiny

The Senate scrutiny of all issued ballot papers (except those spoilt and discarded) and the distribution of preferences are conducted at the CSS in each state or territory. The final results cannot be calculated until the state or territory-wide total of all votes is known and is used to determine the quota – the proportion of votes required by a candidate to be elected. For the Senate, election night results published to the Tally Room are indicative only.

The scrutiny of Senate ballot papers occurs at the CSS. The Australian Electoral Officer for the state or territory is responsible for the scrutiny of ballot papers at the CSS.

Important Information

Unused ballot papers and spoilt and discarded envelopes are reconciled as part of the DRO Senate Count process. This ensures all ballot papers issued to a polling location are accounted for. Unused ballot papers and spoilt and discarded envelopes are packaged for final storage. They are not forwarded to the CSS.

[Visit the AEC website](#) for further information on the Central Senate Scrutiny.

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