# 2020-21
## CORPORATE PLAN

**AEC**
Australian Electoral Commission

# WELCOME

# WELCOME TO OUR CORPORATE PLAN

## Welcome to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) 2020–21 Corporate Plan, which sets our strategic direction for the next four years.

Challenges to the successful administration of electoral events continue to multiply with a number of unprecedented local and world events, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, electoral administration continues to be an increasingly complex endeavour, and I'm conscious our commitment to improvement and innovation—and our values of professionalism, agility, quality and electoral integrity—have never been more important.

To remain agile—now and into the future—we must continue refining our election delivery model through our lessons management approach. We will continue to evolve our planning processes, address the delivery of electoral events in a pandemic, and improve our delivery model for future electoral cycles.

Elections are Australia's largest and most complex single peacetime event. This fact is masked by the electoral administrator's conundrum: the better and more efficient the election, the simpler the event appears to voters, candidates and political parties, most of who only interact with the voting process episodically and for a few brief minutes. However, there are a large number of logistically complicated and legislatively complex steps required to deliver elections successfully, including satisfying rapidly evolving community expectations. Our modernisation journey must consider these expectations as well as the realities of our funding, the availability and cost of technology, legislation and the ever-increasing threat of disinformation and cyber security. To continue to safeguard our democracy we must further mature our regulatory capability and work proactively with our stakeholders to solve these multidimensional problems.

The modernisation of our two main election systems remains critical to ensure these can respond to future changes in legislation and our rapidly changing external environment. Investing in training for our permanent employees and large temporary election workforce remains a priority, as stated in our recently launched learning and development strategy.

This year, we have further refined our performance framework. We have re-focused the six agency directions in last year's corporate plan to four key activities. These enable us to deliver our purpose and ensure an efficient, effective and secure electoral system for Australia. Our corporate plan continues to guide our agency and is an integral part of our performance and reporting framework.

## COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

I, as the accountable authority of the Australian Electoral Commission, present our 2020–21 Corporate Plan, which covers the period 2020–2024, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

**Tom Rogers**
Electoral Commissioner

# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

This is the AEC's corporate plan for 2020–21, which sets the organisation'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 an independent statutory authority established by the Australian Government.

**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.

We do this by:

- conducting successful electoral events, including federal elections, by-elections and referendums, and industrial elections and ballot programs
- ensuring confidence in the electoral roll
- regulating political party registrations and financial disclosure
- supporting electoral redistributions
- undertaking public awareness activities

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

## 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:

- Chairperson: Hon. Dennis Cowdroy AO, QC
- Electoral Commissioner: Mr Tom Rogers
- Non-judicial member: Dr David Gruen, Australian Statistician

## Vision

**Our vision is:**
*We are a leader in refining and delivering best practice in election management.*
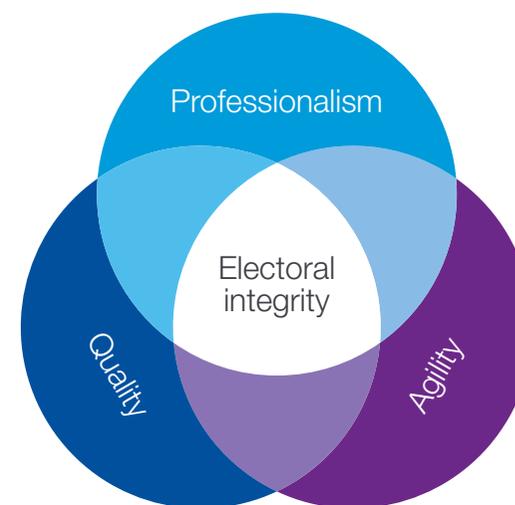
# INTRODUCTION

## Key activities

**Our key activities** are the distinct or significant work that contributes to achieving our purpose, and are our current areas of focus. They are:

1. maintain the integrity of electoral and regulatory processes

2. prepare for and deliver electoral events

3. engage with our stakeholders through education and public awareness activities

4. maintain a capable and agile organisation and continue to professionalise our workforce

Our four key activities replace our six agency directions in last year's plan. Our performance is measured against our key activities.

## 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 risk, and cooperate with others to deliver our purpose.

## Performance

**Our performance** outlines the expected level of performance for each key activity in achieving our purpose, and how it is measured.

Our performance aligns with the performance criteria in the Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS)[1]. In the PBS, the AEC has one outcome: **Program 1.1 — To deliver electoral events**. The AEC's outcome drives **our purpose**. Results of our performance are published in the performance statement in the annual report.

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1. See 2020–21 PBS to be published in October 2020.

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# OPERATING CONTEXT

# OUR ENVIRONMENT

## Our operating environment has never been more complex and fluid, and we are experiencing an unprecedented number of operational challenges.

Local and world events, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic, have significantly changed our operating environment. Never before has there been more urgency for an agile response to delivering electoral events and maintaining electoral integrity. To remain agile, our commitment to ongoing improvement and innovation continues, to meet both the immediate needs of event delivery and longer-term community expectations through current and future electoral cycles.

The Australian electoral system presents a number of unique challenges. With no fixed date for federal elections, we must always be ready to deliver an electoral event at any point in the electoral cycle. We do this through effective election planning and balancing the appropriate level of election readiness with risks and cost.

For example, to successfully deliver an electoral event during a one-in-a-hundred-year pandemic, event planning must be quickly adjusted to ensure voting services are delivered in line with health guidelines and restrictions. We must also respond with agility to other emergency events such as bushfires, which can impact the delivery of enrolment and voter services.

The rapidly evolving and increasingly uncertain environment brings more complexity to election readiness and delivery. For the AEC, this presents a number of ongoing challenges. The increasing trend in pre-poll voting, and the ongoing demand for more accessible and convenient voting options, require considerable preparations and planning.

The AEC already goes above and beyond to provide early, postal, inter-division and interstate, mobile and overseas voting options and services. We must do this within the remit of our legislation which offers both opportunities and challenges for the way we conduct our business into the future.

The highly prescriptive process for conducting elections outlined in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) must be balanced with evolving technological, demographic and stakeholder demands for error free, transparent, modern and efficient electoral events. Increased scale, changing voter expectations, 24-hour social media commentary, security concerns—and now a global pandemic—are some of the factors adding further difficulty to an evolving electoral environment. The AEC's regulatory role must also mature to keep pace with these changes.

We must remain vigilant about physical and online security as well as information privacy. We continue to acknowledge and manage the changing cyber security environment, and the ever-increasing threat of disinformation. To do this we need to seize opportunities to incorporate technological solutions to deliver more efficient electoral events, refine internal processes, and train and support our staff.

Despite these challenges, the AEC administers an electoral system that successfully maintains a very high level of electoral participation. We recognise and are focused on some parts of the community that face challenges in fully participating in elections. We must continue to develop community engagement resources, using targeted, evidence-based and multi-pronged approaches to identify and engage these groups and increase electoral participation for all Australians.

To solve these many complex and unfolding problems, we work with new and existing stakeholders—and broaden our engagement—to deliver innovative solutions. Through the four key activities in this plan, the AEC strategically and methodically builds our capability, manages our risk and collaborates with others, to deliver electoral events and services to the Australian community.

# OUR RISK OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT

## With COVID-19 impacting all aspects of our operations, we must adapt and respond to manage our risks effectively.

It is crucial that we meet Australian Government and community expectations to provide a safe environment for the public to enrol and vote, and to stay informed and educated about our electoral system.

## Our risk management framework

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

- legitimise risk taking within our appetite
- strengthen strategic alignment and risk communication
- promote learning opportunities that reinforce positive risk behaviour
- share good practice and better integrate risks with lessons learnt
- bolster collaboration in managing shared risks
- embed enterprise risk management to improve the quality of risk assessments and reporting

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

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

Our risk appetite statement confirms that the AEC accepts medium and low levels of risk, and prefers not to accept high or extreme risks. The following table lists our strategic and enterprise risks, their impacts and mitigation strategies.

# OUR RISK OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT

## Managing our strategic and enterprise risks

| Strategic risk | Impact of risk eventuating | Mitigating strategies |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The Commonwealth Electoral Act and the AEC's current operating model loses relevance to the modern day service delivery experience and expectation of electors and stakeholders, especially in a COVID-19 pandemic environment. | • Disengagement from external and internal stakeholders, employees and temporary election workforce<br>• More electors vote informally or not at all<br>• Reduced ability to positively influence electoral policy and legislation<br>• Health hazards to AEC employees and the public | The AEC regularly scans the environment to assess the risk context and respond collaboratively to changes. This is supported by a robust governance framework that oversees a range of organisational health factors.<br><br>The AEC is becoming a learning organisation and is continuing to invest in developing people. We develop strategies to build the critical operational and professional capabilities of APS staff and the temporary election workforce.<br><br>We use lessons management to inform and refine behavioural and business process improvements for future electoral events.<br><br>The AEC has committed to investing in a future operating model to sustain continual improvement, both in voter experience and in the AEC workforce through future electoral cycles. |
| 2. The AEC is unable to uphold electoral integrity and transparency against a changing environment of domestic and global threats. | • Electors are disenfranchised<br>• Election delivery outcomes are adversely affected<br>• Increased external scrutiny<br>• Privacy or confidentiality breach | |
| 3. AEC fails to build trusting relationships with electors, political stakeholders and the government. | • More electors vote informally or not at all<br>• Reduced ability to positively influence electoral policy and legislation | |
| 4. The AEC cannot source and maintain a capable and trained APS and temporary election workforce. | • Impact on election readiness and change effectiveness<br>• Inability to meet community expectations for delivery of polling services | |
| 5. The AEC is not properly positioned for the future and is unable to deliver its core business and services as its systems and processes are not sustainable, relevant or modern. | • Reduced ability to effectively and efficiently deliver core business and improve service offering | |

# OUR CAPABILITY

In an increasingly complex operating environment, we continue to build our organisational capability by refining and modernising the way we do business and adapting to change.

We are focused on modernising our processes, delivery model, IT systems, and approach to workforce management, while further maturing our regulatory capability. We do this through learning lessons, regularly refining our business model and systems and innovating and investing in effective change that enhances our agency capability and our service offering.

Guided by the AEC's values of electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism, we can adapt swiftly to change, and identify innovative solutions to meet our challenges. To operate effectively despite uncertainty, we must have the required underlying organisational capability that delivers our normal daily activities but also enables us to meet our future requirements and those of our stakeholders.

## Our people capability

With a network of APS staff across Australia—and a temporary election workforce of over 87,000 at a federal election—the AEC's people are critical to delivering our purpose.

### Strategic workforce planning

Our strategic workforce planning aims to build organisational capability by supporting talent management and succession planning over the employee lifecycle. With a focus on further professionalising the AEC workforce, our strategic workforce planning focuses on attracting, developing and retaining a professional, responsive and agile workforce, and driving a positive and healthy workplace culture that delivers high performance.

Our continued commitment to driving and promoting diversity and inclusion—and removing barriers to inclusion—is outlined in the AEC's *Diversity Inclusion Strategy 2019–2022*. The AEC's ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is outlined in the AEC's *Reconciliation Action Plan 2020–21*. It includes the actions we are taking and the targets we have set to improve opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Both documents help build diversity and inclusion in our workforce, and—in turn—improve our services to all Australians.

### Learning and professional development

The AEC's *Learning and Professional Development Strategy 2020–2025* builds on our considerable investment in professionalising our workforce, and positions the AEC to meet current and future requirements. It guides our commitment to being a learning organisation, aims to increase organisational capability, and provides clear development pathways to foster continuous improvement and innovation.

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# OUR CAPABILITY

## Our IT capability

### IT systems

Providing resilient, modern and secure systems is critical to delivering electoral events. Our core election and enrolment systems continue to age, and are costly to maintain. To better respond to contemporary election and security risks—as well as global and economic challenges—we must improve practices and create process efficiencies by building our IT capability.

Guided by our *ICT Strategic Plan 2018–2022*, we are working to modernise our core election and enrolment systems to ensure they:

- are agile and adaptable
- use a single modern platform
- are fully integrated, sustainable and user-intuitive

The ICT plan aligns our technology capability with our long-term business strategy. It focuses on system security, modernisation and more effective use of internal data to inform business decisions. A modern electoral management system and infrastructure will improve the AEC's capability to deal with security risks, and to enhance our ability to detect, prevent and respond to external interference in elections.

The AEC will continue to build on the business case and baseline work to modernise our core election and enrolment systems.

### Cyber security

The AEC is fully committed to managing its cyber security program and the threat of cyber-attacks. We partner with Australian Government security and intelligence agencies to maintain compliance with security standards and to ensure better understanding of the cyber security threat environment. We cooperate with electoral management bodies around the world and the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand, undertake cyber security training, and work to mitigate the risk of cyber security incidents.

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# OUR COOPERATION

The AEC continues to broaden cooperation with others to ensure we can continue to deliver effective and secure elections into the future, and within a rapidly changing environment.

The AEC cooperates with organisations and stakeholders—new and existing—to draw on available and appropriate resources, support and advice. A broad range of government agencies and organisations, and commercial and industry partners, work with the AEC to deliver electoral events through service provision and strategic partnerships. The AEC also provides support to others.

## Delivering electoral events

A federal election is perhaps the biggest peacetime logistical event in Australia, and the scale and complexity of the task is growing. To deliver what are often logistically complex voting options, the AEC has key partnerships and collaborations with Commonwealth agencies and state, territory and local government jurisdictions. For example:

- the Australian Taxation Office and state and territory agencies work together and share data to improve the quality of the electoral roll

- Australian Bureau of Statistics population data informs redistribution activities

- Services Australia provides call centre services and helps with remote mobile polling

- the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is integral to our delivery of electoral events to Australians around the world

- suspected breaches of criminal offences in the Commonwealth Electoral Act are referred to the Australian Federal Police for assessment and investigation

- the AEC co-chairs the Electoral Integrity Assurance Task Force which consists of a number of Commonwealth government agencies—including the Australian intelligence community—to help detect and prevent interference in the election

The AEC works with state and territory electoral commissions and other key stakeholders to support all Australians' electoral participation, including voters from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous Australians, people with disability, homeless people and youth. This includes working in partnership with community organisations, Commonwealth, state and local government entities, and other service providers to implement and promote pilot initiatives and programs, distribute electoral information, increase awareness and education on electoral processes, and promote recruitment opportunities. The AEC collaborates with the disability sector by chairing the Disability Advisory Committee which promotes greater accessibility, inclusion and participation in the electoral process by people with disability.

# OUR COOPERATION

Our important work continues through challenges such as COVID-19 and other emergencies including bushfires. During these times, consultation with senior medical officials, health authorities, relevant recovery and resilience focused agencies and taskforces, state police and education departments has increased, and will continue to do so as the AEC prepares to deliver electoral events during a pandemic.

Our liaison with industry experts and commercial partners and suppliers ensures a seamless and nationally-coordinated approach to supply chain and logistics. This allows the AEC to deliver the appropriate number of ballot papers and materials to provide a seamless and consistent voter experience. Our long standing commercial relationship with Australia Post ensures we can provide a range of postal and enrolment services.

## Strategic partnerships

The AEC works closely with many Commonwealth and state government agencies and other key stakeholders, such as social media companies, to protect Australia's electoral integrity and to share knowledge.

To mitigate threats to electoral integrity from malicious cyber activity, physical means, foreign interference or disinformation, we engage with partner security agencies, including the Australian Cyber Security Centre. These relationships ensure we are ready to re-establish the Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce to help safeguard against interference that may impact on the integrity of electoral events. Agencies represented on the taskforce have vast and varied expertise and capability, and support the AEC through the delivery phase of elections to reduce the risk of interference. Agencies represented on the Taskforce include:

- Australian Electoral Commission
- Department of Finance
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
- Attorney-General's Department
- Department of Home Affairs
- Australian Federal Police

The Taskforce is also supported, as needed, by the national intelligence community.

To further understand and monitor the electoral environment in Australia and internationally, we engage and collaborate with other electoral management bodies, such as the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand. This enhances a shared understanding of the broader electoral environment to compare legislative frameworks and services, and to learn through the experiences of other agencies. For example, overseas electoral commissions such as Elections Canada and the UK Electoral Commission, are interested in running similar activities to the AEC's *Stop and Consider* campaign which helps voters avoid being misled by disinformation.

The AEC also undertakes strategic engagement with developing countries and emerging democracies on electoral administration. This is achieved through collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in-line with the Australian Government's national and foreign policy interests.

The AEC also works very closely with the Department of Finance to help inform electoral policy and legislative reform, and to shape the future electoral operating environment. Much of this is informed by our engagement with other electoral management bodies from around Australia and overseas. This information and experience is also used to inform our submissions and advice to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

# OUR COOPERATION

## Supporting others

The AEC supports state, territory and local government elections and by-elections by managing the Commonwealth Electoral Roll, and through joint-roll arrangements. The AEC also conducts industrial elections and ballots under the provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009* and the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.

The AEC provides support for international electoral management bodies in close cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Through a range of bilateral and multilateral programs, the AEC is engaged throughout the Indo-Pacific region to deliver capacity building and support for electoral administrators.

The AEC provides a Secretariat for the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators (PIANZEA) Network, which has facilitated the delivery of programs and resources for over 20 years to strengthen the capacity and capability of Pacific Island electoral management bodies.

An important part of the AEC's support for international electoral management bodies is our 20 year involvement in the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) program. BRIDGE is a modular professional development program with a particular focus on electoral processes. As a founding partner of BRIDGE, the AEC continues to deliver secretariat functions, develop new and updated curriculum and facilitation materials, and provide support and advice on project management and implementation. Along with the AEC, BRIDGE partners include:

- International IDEA—the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- the International Foundation for Electoral Systems
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD)

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# OUR PERFORMANCE

This year we have further improved our performance framework, refined our agency directions into four agency activities, and provided more detailed performance measures and targets.

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

The following pages detail our key activities and how we will measure our performance against these.

## Reporting cycles

We continue to operate on two reporting cycles: externally we report on a four-year cycle through the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA)* and we report internally as part of the electoral cycle. Externally, we report on a four-year cycle through the PGPA. We report our performance through the annual performance statements in our annual reports. Internally, we are focused on a three-year electoral cycle encompassing the three phases of election readiness used in our election readiness framework:

1. Lessons

2. Implement change

3. Mobilisation

We must always be ready to deliver an electoral event. Each phase of the election readiness framework directs the activities to be undertaken, and is reflected in the performance measures for the year. Our lessons management approach directs a continual cycle of improvement and learning across all aspects of AEC operations. In 2019–20—following delivery of the federal election in May 2019—we moved into the 'lessons' phase. In 2020–21 we will move through 'implement change' and then 'mobilisation' at the next federal event, currently expected in 2021–22.

# PERFORMANCE

# KEY ACTIVITY ONE

## Maintain the integrity of electoral and regulatory processes

An essential feature of Australian democracy is an electoral system which consistently 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* 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

This enables all eligible Australians to enrol, nominate as candidates, vote, and have their votes counted accurately and securely in an electoral system that is free and fair, and that is appropriately regulated.

**1.1 Our intended result:** Deliver the franchise—an Australian citizen's right to vote

### AEC contributions

- Maintain impartial and independent enrolment and electoral services and processes that enable voters to exercise their franchise

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of eligible voters enrolled (enrolment rate)** <br> **Method:** Roll and population data calculated and reported annually at the end of each financial year and at Close of Rolls for a federal election or referendum. **Source:** Electoral Roll data and Australian Bureau of Statistics population data. | ≥95% | ≥95% | ≥95% | ≥95% |
| **Percentage of voters enrolled who turnout to vote at all federal electoral events (turnout rate)** <br> **Method:** Number of people enrolled to vote who cast a vote by any voting method at a federal electoral event. **Source:** The AEC Election Management System. | No target. Turnout rate to be reported. | | | |
| **Percentage of votes cast formally for the House of Representatives and Senate at the next federal election or at a referendum or for by-elections (if any held) (formality rate)** <br> **Method:** Percentage of informal votes cast when compared to all votes cast at a federal electoral event. **Source:** The AEC Election Management System. | No target. Formality rate to be reported. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY ONE

## Maintain the integrity of electoral and regulatory processes

**1.2 Our intended result:** Maintain a high level of confidence in the electoral roll

### AEC contributions

- 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

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage accuracy of the Commonwealth Electoral Roll at the electoral division and individual address-level**<br>**Method:** The Annual Roll Integrity Review (ARIR) measures the accuracy and integrity of electoral roll data against other agency data. **Source:** Data from Services Australia, the National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information System Exchange, and the Australian Taxation Office. | ≥95% and ≥90% | ≥95% and ≥90% | ≥95% and ≥90% | ≥95% and ≥90% |

### AEC contributions

- 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

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Redistributions determined when planned in accordance with timeframes identified in the Electoral Act.**<br>**Method:** Publication of notices and letters to electors complies with requirements in the Electoral Act (Part IV). **Source:** Government Gazette and newspaper notices, and the date of letters to electors lodged with Australia Post. | All redistributions in the period determined and affected electors informed. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY ONE

Maintain the integrity of electoral
and regulatory processes

**1.3 Our intended result:** Exercise our regulatory functions

**AEC contributions**

- Process political party registrations in accordance with the Electoral Act

- Regulate the funding and financial disclosure scheme for political parties, entities and individuals with disclosure obligations

- Implement a self-service platform to enable political parties, entities and individuals to engage with the AEC as they carry out their legislative and regulatory responsibilities and obligations

- Develop education and awareness resources and products to assist political entities in Part XX of the Electoral Act and those impacted by electoral authorisations to understand and comply with their regulatory responsibilities

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The AEC maintains an up-to-date public register of political parties**<br>**Method:** No identified breaches of Part XI of the Electoral Act. **Source:** The Electoral Act (Part XI), AEC funding and disclosure Client & Return Management system and AEC website. | Compliance with Part XI of the Electoral Act. | | | |
| **Disclosure returns are published and regulated in accordance with timeframes in the Electoral Act**<br>**Method:** Confirmation that the publishing date of disclosure returns is in accordance with the Electoral Act. **Source:** The Transparency Register on the AEC website. | Annual returns published on the first working day in February 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.<br><br>Election returns published 24 weeks after polling day for each electoral event. | | | |

# KEY ACTIVITY ONE

Maintain the integrity of electoral and regulatory processes

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Compliance reviews of political parties and entities with disclosure obligations are completed and published**<br>**Method:** Compare number of completed compliance reviews against approved program. **Source:** Compliance Review Committee Reports and the AEC website. | Reviews completed annually compared to the approved program. | | | |
| **The AEC self-service platform is utilised by political stakeholders**<br>**Method:** Utilisation of the self-service platform by political stakeholders. **Source:** Evaluation of interactions with political stakeholders through usage statistics and reports. | Establish a baseline in 2020-21 | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY TWO

## 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 increasing community expectations—the AEC must deliver these services and events with the highest degree of integrity, impartiality, and in accordance with legislation. We must deliver to all stakeholders and diverse customer service expectations (including more than 16 million electors). Electoral services and events need to 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, and election readiness must be balanced against other agency priorities.

As an organisation focused on learning we use a lessons management approach during and following an electoral event to ensure we continue to deliver successful electoral events to Australians. Within the bounds of the Electoral Act, the AEC is focused on continuing to enhance and modernise our model for delivering electoral events and services.

Under the Electoral Act, the AEC also provides support for international electoral management bodies in close cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**2.1 Our intended result:** The AEC maintains an appropriate level of election readiness

### AEC contributions

- Using the Election Readiness Framework, the AEC comprehensively prepares for the federal election and other electoral events

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AEC-wide readiness checks before and at the issue of election writs confirm an appropriate level of election readiness**<br><br>**Method:** Internal readiness assessment before each federal election.<br>**Source:** AEC Election Readiness Framework and Assessment Framework. | Agency-wide readiness checks conducted prior to the next federal election at the:<br><br>• Writ Ready minus 100 day Directed Level of Electoral Readiness date.<br>• Directed Level of Electoral Readiness date. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY TWO

## Prepare for and deliver electoral events

**2.2 Our intended result:** The public and stakeholders have confidence the electoral process is well managed in accordance with legislation

### AEC contributions

- Successfully deliver federal electoral events in accordance with legislation

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The writs for a federal election event are issued and returned in accordance with legislation and timeframes**<br>**Method:** Writs returned to the Governor-General or State Governors or the Speaker of the House of Representatives. **Source:** Electoral Act/ AEC website. | Date on the returned election writs falls within the timeframe specified. | | | |
| **The election result—for each event—is delivered with integrity and withstands scrutiny**<br>**Method:** Court of Disputed Returns advice. **Source:** Outcomes of the Court of Disputed Returns. | The number of Court of Disputed Returns matters—challenging AEC conduct—and whether these challenges are dismissed or upheld in favour of the AEC. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY TWO

## Prepare for and deliver electoral events

**2.3 Our intended result:** Accessible and high quality enrolment and polling services

### AEC contributions

- Deliver enrolment services to electors in a timely and efficient manner
- Identify opportunities to modernise delivery of enrolment services and increase digital offerings to our stakeholders

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of new enrolments and enrolment updates lodged through the Online Enrolment Service*** <br> **Method:** Rates calculated monthly and reported annually at the end of each financial year and close of rolls for full federal elections. **Source:** Roll data from AEC enrolment systems and extracts. | ≥65% | ≥65% | ≥68% | ≥68% |
| **Percentage of enrolment applications lodged via the Online Enrolment System that are system approved**** <br> **Method:** Rates calculated monthly and reported annually at the end of each financial year and close of rolls for full federal elections. **Source:** Roll data from AEC enrolment systems and extracts. | ≥55% | ≥60% | ≥60% | ≥60% |

\* Excluding Federal Direct Enrolment Update (FDEU). Targets may vary noting impacts of federal electoral events may change reporting outcomes.

\*\* Improvement to these performance measures is dependent on future modernisation of AEC systems.

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# KEY ACTIVITY TWO

## Prepare for and deliver electoral events

**AEC contributions**

- Deliver polling services to the public (including priority groups – see below in Key Activity 3) within the parameters and timeframes set in the Electoral Act and the AEC's Event Service Plan

- 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

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Voting locations (including early voting centres and polling places) published on the AEC website before polling commences for each electoral event**<br><br>**Method:** Publication on the AEC website. **Source:** AEC Election Management System data/AEC website. | 100% of polling locations are published. | | | |
| **After election night, count information is progressively updated on the AEC website**<br><br>**Method:** Publication on the AEC website. **Source:** AEC Election Management System data. | Preliminary election results available on election night and progressive count information updated on the AEC website. | | | |
| **Undertake a lessons management approach to delivering the next federal election**<br><br>**Method:** Agency-wide qualitative analysis. **Source:** AEC Election Readiness Framework. | Lessons from the 2019 federal election implemented at the next federal election. | | | |

# KEY ACTIVITY TWO

## Prepare for and deliver electoral events

**2.4 Our intended result:** Industrial elections and ballots are designed for the future and delivered with integrity

### AEC contributions

- The AEC meets legislative requirements to conduct:
  - electoral events for organisations registered with the Fair Work Commission
  - protected action ballots when assigned as the Ballot Agency by the Fair Work Commission
- Engage with stakeholders to modernise industrial election processes, mature planning and assurance, and detail lessons learned

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The AEC meets timeframes for key election delivery targets—issuing of election notices, ballot periods, declared results and post-election reports**<br><br>**Method:** Data mining. **Source:** AEC IEB election management systems, internal records and data. | ≥98% of target timeframes are met annually. | | | |
| **Election and ballot results are delivered with integrity and withstand scrutiny**<br><br>**Method:** High Court advice. **Source:** High Court outcomes. | The number of events where the AEC's conduct is challenged and whether these are dismissed or upheld in favour of the AEC. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY THREE

## Engage with our stakeholders through education and public awareness activities

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 a federal election, 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. Targeted information, services and tools, and strategic partnerships are developed for priority groups, including those who may experience barriers to electoral participation.

The AEC also continues to deliver education programs for tens of thousands of school children through our National Election Education Centre in Canberra.

**3.1 Our intended result:** Enable Australians to participate in electoral events and understand electoral matters

### AEC contributions

- 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

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Use tracking research to understand if information related to key objectives identified in AEC's public awareness campaign strategy for the next federal election can be met**<br><br>**Method:** Identified benchmarks are met in accordance with the AEC public information strategy. **Source:** AEC public information strategy and associated campaign evaluation, benchmarking and tracking reports. | The public awareness campaign for the federal election meets benchmarks. | | | |
| **Deliver public awareness and education products that target all Australian citizens aged 18 years and over**<br><br>**Method:** Specific communication activities delivered for mainstream and identified special audience groups. **Source:** AEC public information strategy, AEC special audience plans, media performance report, campaign evaluation report. | Campaign is delivered in accordance with objectives outlined in the campaign strategy. | | | |

# KEY ACTIVITY THREE

Engage with our stakeholders through education and public awareness activities

**AEC contributions**

- Work with key stakeholders such as state and territory electoral commissions, further enhance partnership arrangements and extend our digital reach to provide awareness and education products to the priority groups. The priority groups include:

  – youth (18–24 years old)

  – Indigenous Australians

  – people with disability

  – people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

  – people experiencing homelessness

  – prisoners

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of 18 to 24 year old Australians enrolled (youth enrolment rate)**<br><br>**Method:** Rates calculated monthly and published quarterly. **Source:** Roll data from the enrolment system and ABS population data. | ≥82% | ≥85% | ≥87% | ≥87% |
| **Expand access to electoral information amongst priority groups by increasing AEC's digital information presence**<br><br>**Method:** Digital products and usage as part of community engagement activities. **Source:** Digital sources of electoral information (including video and podcasts) for priority groups and data usage. | Extent of digital presence.<br><br>Establish a baseline in 2020–21 for the uptake of digital products among priority groups. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY THREE

Engage with our stakeholders through education and public awareness activities

**3.2 Our intended result:** Enhance understanding of Australia's electoral system amongst the public

## AEC contributions

- Deliver a high quality and accessible electoral education experience to school children through the National Electoral Education Centre and provide targeted professional learning opportunities and resources to teachers that support their teaching of the Australian electoral system

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Annual visitors to the National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC)**<br><br>**Method:** Visitor attendance. **Source:** AEC visitor data captured via the NEEC online booking system. | New baseline determined in 2020–21* | | | |
| **Visitor satisfaction rates at the NEEC**<br><br>**Method:** Visitor satisfaction surveys captured for each education program. **Source:** AEC NEEC visitor data. | ≥90% | ≥90% | ≥90% | ≥90% |
| **Maintain the number of unique online visitors to AEC for Schools website**<br><br>**Method:** AEC website analytics of unique visits to AEC for Schools website. **Source:** AEC for Schools website. | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| **Professional learning participant numbers**<br><br>**Method:** Professional learning participation rates. **Source:** Records of attendance. | New baseline determined in 2020–21* | | | |

\* COVID-19 meant that all NEEC visits and face-to-face education programs were suspended in March 2020. A new baseline visitor target will be established in 2020–21.

# KEY ACTIVITY FOUR

## Maintain a capable and agile organisation and continue to professionalise our workforce

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 must continue to develop our agility and capability. We do this by continuing to refine our organisational structure, focusing on key aspects of governance and assurance, 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 over 87,000 staff during a federal election.

**4.1 Our intended result:** Attract, develop and retain a professional, talented and agile workforce

### AEC contributions

- Continue to attract, retain and develop our workforce by implementing the AEC People Strategy and learning and development strategy
- Further develop our capability to support and train the AEC's temporary election workforce

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of identified APS staff that undertake specific corporate and APS training relevant to their role**<br>**Method:** Training completion data. **Source:** AEC Learning Management System. | ≥ 95% | ≥ 95% | ≥ 95% | ≥ 95% |
| **Percentage of identified APS and TEW staff that complete election training relevant to their role**<br>**Method:** Training completion data. **Source:** AEC Learning Management System. | ≥ 95% | ≥ 95% | ≥ 95% | ≥ 95% |
| **Attract and recruit an AEC temporary election workforce for each electoral event to deliver key polling and election activities**<br>**Method:** Analysis of workforce data. **Source:** AEC Employ, Train and Pay system. | Election workforce in place to support key polling and election activities (pre-polling, polling day and the post-election count). | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY FOUR

Maintain a capable and agile organisation and continue to professionalise our workforce

**4.2 Our intended result:** Invest in organisational capability and governance

**AEC contributions**

- Continue to mature and streamline our agency's organisational structure and governance arrangements, and improve our maturity across management of finance and workforce, risk, security (under Protective Security Policy Framework), information management and privacy

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Increase agency-level governance maturity in the areas of risk management, protective security, privacy and information management**<br><br>**Method:** Survey benchmarking using Commonwealth frameworks and maturity assessments. **Source:** Comcover Risk Culture survey, AEC Information Management Strategy and National Archives of Australia's 'Check-up PLUS' survey and reports, Protective Security Policy Framework, AEC Privacy Management Plan. | Increase or maintain maturity against identified Commonwealth surveys or plans. | | | |
| **Maintain the AEC's average staffing levels**<br><br>**Method:** Performance against defined Commonwealth Government measures. **Source:** AEC Portfolio Budget Statements, Annual Financial Statements and AEC finance and HR reports. | Average staffing levels target met annually. | | | |

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# KEY ACTIVITY FOUR

Maintain a capable and agile organisation and continue to professionalise our workforce

**4.3 Our intended result:** Implement systems and processes that are sustainable, relevant and modern to support election planning and delivery

**AEC contributions**

- Continue investment in the AEC's modernisation agenda

| Performance measures | Target 20–21 | Target 21–22 | Target 22–23 | Target 23–24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Progress the modernisation of the AEC's core election and roll management systems**<br><br>**Method:** Governance reporting mechanisms as guided by program structure and documentation. **Source:** Program documentation and reporting. | Meet the key program milestones associated with the procurement, delivery, execution and de-commissioning of systems. | | | |

# REGULATOR PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The AEC regulates individuals and entities that are involved in the electoral process under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. As a regulatory body we aim to reduce the regulatory burden imposed on our stakeholders.

The AEC maintains impartial and independent enrolment and electoral services and processes that enable eligible voters to exercise their franchise.

The AEC regulates the Commonwealth funding and disclosure scheme detailed under Part XX of the Electoral Act. This requires candidates, Senate groups, political parties, political campaigners, associated entities, third parties and donors to lodge election or annual financial disclosure returns with the AEC. The AEC administers the registration of political parties under Part XI of the Electoral

Act and maintains a Register of Political Parties. This lists those parties which are eligible to have the party affiliation of their endorsed candidates printed on ballot papers at a federal election. The AEC administers the authorisation of electoral communications in accordance with Part XXA of the Electoral Act.

In line with the Australian Government's commitment to reducing the cost of unnecessary and inefficient regulation imposed on individuals, business and community organisations, we measure our

performance against the regulator performance framework. This includes six mandatory key performance indicators set by the Australian Government. The following tables outline our performance against our measures of success.

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# REGULATOR PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

**Key performance indicator 1:** Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities

**Key performance indicator 2:** Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted and effective

**Our measures of good regulatory performance**

- We understand the operating environment and circumstances of eligible electors and other stakeholders, and take actions to minimise the potential for unintended negative impacts on them

**Our measures of good regulatory performance**

- We provide guidance and information that is up to date, clear, accessible and concise through media appropriate to the target audience

| What we do to ensure we meet these performance indicators | Key activity reference |
| --- | --- |
| • Maintain an impartial and independent enrolment and electoral services and processes that enable voters to exercise their franchise | **Key activity 1** |
| • Provide timely information and advice on electoral administration and operations to key stakeholders, including ministers, Parliament and key agencies | **Key activity 2** |
| • Deliver public information awareness and education products that target all Australian citizens aged 18 years and over, including special audiences | **Key activity 3** |

| What we do to ensure we meet these performance indicators | Key activity reference |
| --- | --- |
| • As part of the administration of 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' | **Key activity 1** |
| • Provide timely and accurate electoral information, guidance and public awareness campaigns to a range of target audiences to support enrolment and participation in electoral events<br>• Maintain up-to-date messaging to the public and candidates through the AEC website and social media | **Key activity 3** |

# REGULATOR PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

**Key performance indicator 3:** Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed

**Our measures of good regulatory performance**

- We apply a risk-based, proportionate approach to compliance obligations, engagement and regulatory enforcement actions

| What we do to ensure we meet these performance indicators | Key activity reference |
|---|---|
| - Apply a risk-based proportionate response in addressing multiple voting and non-voter prosecutions and in administering electoral communication requirements<br>- In the administration of the funding and disclosure scheme our response will follow our enforcement policy which provides a risk-based approach to compliance and enforcement | Key activity 1 |
| - Publish our risk management framework and continue to improve our risk management maturity | Key activity 4 |

**Key performance indicator 4:** Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated

**Our measures of good regulatory performance**

- We ensure information requests to the public and stakeholders are tailored and only made when necessary to secure regulatory objectives, and only then in a way that minimises impact

| What we do to ensure we meet these performance indicators | Key activity reference |
|---|---|
| - Apply a risk-based proportionate response in addressing multiple voting and non-voter prosecutions and in administering electoral communication requirements<br>- In the administration of the funding and disclosure scheme we undertake a regular program of risk-based compliance reviews that examine a sample of disclosure returns and undertake a risk-based approach to compliance | Key activity 1 |
| - Actively manage the electoral roll throughout the electoral cycle, and deliver accessible and high quality enrolment and polling services | Key activity 1 and 2 |

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# REGULATOR PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

**Key performance indicator 5:** Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities

**Key performance indicator 6:** Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks

**Our measures of good regulatory performance**

- We are open and responsive to requests from stakeholders regarding the operation of the Electoral Act.
- Electoral results, information and data are published in a timely manner to ensure accountability to the public and stakeholders.

**Our measures of good regulatory performance**

- We regularly share feedback from stakeholders and performance information to improve the operation of the regulatory framework and administrative processes.

| What we do to ensure we meet these performance indicators | Key activity reference |
|---|---|
| • Publish policy and guidance on stakeholders obligations under the Electoral Act, and outline the AEC compliance and enforcement framework. The AEC provides notices and, where necessary, warnings to regulated entities to inform them of their obligations<br>• Regulate the funding and disclosure scheme, ensuring that disclosure returns are published and regulated in accordance with timeframes. The outcomes of compliance activity are published on the AEC's website | **Key activity 1** |
| • Provide timely information and advice on electoral administration and operations to key stakeholders, including ministers, Parliament and key agencies<br>• Provide count information and electoral data to the public and stakeholders for electoral events | **Key activity 2** |

| What we do to ensure we meet these performance indicators | Key activity reference |
|---|---|
| • Manage feedback and complaints in line with the AEC Complaints Management Policy, seeking improvements in administration when relevant<br>• Continue to mature and embed our lessons management approach and capability | **Key activity 2** |

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