

# Election Contact Centre Application Home Page:- Covid-19 Secure Telephone Voting Information Notices

## Eligibility to phone vote

### Issue:

The Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers has this morning signed a brief to Government recommending that the eligibility for telephone voting services for people who have tested positive to COVID-19 be expanded.

This would see electors who have tested positive to COVID-19 since Saturday 14 May 2022 being able to also phone vote.

(Further information will be provided shortly)

## Eligibility to phone vote

### Issue:

The Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers has this morning signed a brief to Government recommending that the eligibility for telephone voting services for people who have tested positive to COVID-19 be expanded.

- At this stage eligibility to use the telephone voting service remains that electors need to have tested positive to COVID-19 after 6pm Tuesday 17 May
- If this changes today there will be public communications to advise the detail
- AEC general enquiries staff are not to provide the Secure Telephone Voting number for COVID-19 affected electors to callers who do not meet the criteria. Scripts will be updated if the legislation changes.

## Eligibility to phone vote

### Issue:

The eligibility for the telephone voting service for people who have tested positive to COVID-19 has been expanded to include electors who have tested positive after **6pm Friday 13 May**.

Scripts can be found by searching for 'Covid'.

## Telephone Voting registration

**Issue:** Online registration is now closed for COVID-19 affected electors. Electors can call 1800 413 960 to register by phone before 4pm local time Saturday 21 May.

Telephone voting closes at 6pm local time. Electors will still be able to vote if they have registered and are waiting on the line when polls close at 6pm local time on Saturday 21 May.

# **Covid-19 Secure Telephone Voting Scripts**

## **20 May to 3 June (close of contact centre)**

### **Telephone voting for COVID-19 affected voters: How to register**

#### **Eligibility for telephone voting service**

The service is only for people who've tested positive to COVID-19 after 6pm Friday 13 May and will still be in isolation on Saturday 21 May.

You must meet strict eligibility requirements and register by 4.00pm local time Saturday 21 May.

#### **How to register to vote by phone**

Go to [aec.gov.au/covid](https://aec.gov.au/covid) and follow the prompts. This is the quickest way to register. You can also call 1800 413 960, but there may be lengthy wait times.

##### **Step 1**

Prepare evidence of being COVID-19 positive. This should be:

- If PCR – the location/address of the testing centre, the date and time you received your positive test result and the reference number from by your health authority when notified of your positive result (if provided).
- If RAT – the brand and serial number of your test (if available), the date and time of your positive RAT result, and if provided, a reference number from your health authority when you notified them of your positive result.

##### **Step 2**

Call 1800 413 960. You can ask for an interpreter who speaks your language. Have your evidence ready, as during the call you'll be asked to declare that you're unable to attend a polling place because you're isolating with COVID-19. You will also be asked to select a six-digit secure PIN.

##### **Step 3**

You will be sent an eight-digit phone voting registration number by SMS or email. You will need to use the PIN and registration number when you call to cast your vote, rather than providing your name and address, so your vote remains secret.

#### **Registration operating hours**

##### **Online registration**

- Opens Wednesday 18 May 6.01pm AEST.
- Closes Saturday 21 May 4.00pm AEST.

## **Phone registration**

- Thursday 19 May 8.30am to 5.30pm local time.
- Friday 20 May 8.30am to 5.30pm local time.
- Saturday 21 May 8.00am to 4.00pm local time.

## **People who speak a language other than English**

If you ring 1800 413 960 to register rather than doing this online, you can ask for an interpreter who speaks your language to join the call.

To register, please press 1. If you have registered and would like to cast your vote, press 2.

## **Close contacts – no symptoms**

If you're a close contact without symptoms and don't need to isolate, you can still vote in person at a polling place.

## **Close contacts – with symptoms**

The service is only available for those who test COVID-19 positive after 6.00pm local time Friday 13 May and will be in isolation on Saturday 21 May.

# COVID-19 Telephone Voting: How do I vote by phone? What are the operating hours?

## How to vote by phone

You should expect long call wait times.

### Step 1

Go to the link from your SMS or email to view an image of the ballot papers for your electoral division. Have your eight-digit registration number, PIN, and voting preferences ready.

### Step 2

Call 1800 413 960. The operator will ask you to:

- make another declaration about your eligibility to vote by phone
- provide your eight-digit registration number and six-digit secure PIN (don't provide your name or address - this ensures your vote stays secret)
- confirm you have an image of your ballot papers in front of you
- describe how you would like the operator to record your vote
- confirm this is how you wish to vote, before finalising the call.

## People who speak a language other than English

When you ring 1800 413 960 to vote, you can ask for an interpreter who speaks your language to join the call.

To register, please press 1. If you have registered and would like to cast your vote, press 2.

## Phone voting operating hours

- Thursday 19 May 8.30am to 5.30pm local time.
- Friday 20 May 8.30am to 6.00pm local time.
- Saturday 21 May 8.00am to 6.00pm local time.

You'll still be able to cast your vote if you've and are waiting on the line to vote when polls close at 6.00pm on Saturday 21 May.

# **Why should I have to vote if I have COVID-19? Will I be fined if I have COVID-19 and don't vote?**

## **Why should I have to vote if I have COVID-19**

We want to make sure all eligible people are supported to cast a vote and have their say in Australia's future. The phone voting service was introduced as an emergency measure knowing many people would be in isolation on election day and still need a way to vote. A reminder that voting is also compulsory for Australian citizens aged 18 years and over.

## **Fines for not voting**

If you have a valid and sufficient reason for not voting and get a notice, you can write back to explain the reason why you couldn't vote. You should include evidence of being COVID-19 positive after 6.00pm local time Friday 13 May and will be in isolation on Saturday 21 May. The email address is [reason@aec.gov.au](mailto:reason@aec.gov.au).

## **People who are deaf and COVID-19 positive**

If you're eligible, you can phone vote with an Auslan interpreter. There are two ways to access the service:

- the [Convo Australia website](http://www.convoaustralia.com/vote) – <http://www.convoaustralia.com/vote>
- the Convo Australia app (download on your personal device (smartphone or tablet). Simply tap the AEC logo to make a direct connection with an Auslan interpreter.

Your interpreter will then connect you to the secure telephone voting service number and assist you with your vote.

## **Applied for but haven't received postal vote**

If you tested COVID-19 positive after 6pm Friday 13 May, you can register to vote by phone. Make sure you call to vote as soon as you can after this, as there might be a long wait on election day.

## **Received postal vote but now eligible for phone vote**

There's still time to complete and return it to us. Ballot papers must be completed and witnessed on or before election day and sent back by Fri 3 June. It could be a long wait on the phone on election day.

## **I can't find the serial number on my RAT.**

The location will depend on the brand of RAT you used. The number could be on the front or back of the packet, or next to an image or icon. It's ok if you can't find it – but to prove eligibility, you do need to provide the brand and receipt number from the health authority that registered the positive test (if available).

## **I can't find my registration number or PIN**

When you registered, the operator will have asked if you wanted to receive your registration number and PIN by SMS or email. You might like to re-check your phone or inbox in case the message went into another folder. If you still can't find either number, you can call 1800 413 960 to register again.

## **The phone wait time is too long; I can't get through; I don't want to wait on hold; How long is the hold time?**

### **Phone wait times**

We know it's frustrating to wait on the phone, especially if you're not feeling well. I understand the service is experiencing high demand, which means it might take longer for you get through. Thanks for your patience as we work to help all eligible people cast their vote.

### **Can't get through**

I understand the service is experiencing high demand, which means it might take longer for you get through. Thanks for your patience as we work to help all eligible people cast their vote.

### **How long voting takes by phone**

This is not a service the AEC usually provides, so voting by phone will take longer than if this was done in person or by post. The operator needs to follow a process that keeps your vote secure. They must confirm your details, find the ballot papers for your electoral division, record how you wish to vote for both papers, read back your selection and then re-confirm this is how you wish to vote.

To make things quicker and reduce wait times, visit the AEC website to look at an image of ballot papers for your electoral division and consider your preferences before calling to vote.

## **What will happen if I'm still on hold after 6pm on election day?**

You'll still be able to cast your vote if you registered and are waiting on the line to vote when polls close at 6.00pm on Saturday 21 May. You won't be able to vote if you call after 6.00pm.

## **What happens to completed ballot papers after I vote by phone? What happens to my personal information?**

### **What happens to completed ballot papers**

After voting closes on election day, envelopes will be sorted, reconciled, and packed for secure dispatch to their home division. There, they'll be receipted, opened, and counted from the Wednesday after election day.

## Security of ballot papers

Ballot paper handling requirements in call centres are subject to the same stringent handling and reconciliation requirements as in-person polling places. Votes will only be counted after secure return to the relevant divisional offices, which is also conducted under scrutineer observation.

## What happens to my personal information

We handle personal information in accordance with privacy legislation, and this includes securely storing the info provided when you register. Visit the privacy page of our website for details.

We won't ask for your personal details when you call to vote. You'll quote a registration number we provided to you by SMS or email. This ensures your vote stays secret.

## How is the service scrutineered

It's the same as every voting process we deliver. Candidates and party-appointed scrutineers can observe, or you can ask that a scrutineer not do this if it's your preference. Votes will only be counted after secure return to the relevant divisional offices, which is also conducted under scrutineer observation.

## I don't want to vote by phone; I want to vote online.

No online voting for federal elections is available, regardless of personal circumstances.

## I'm overseas. Can I use the phone voting service?

No, the phone voting service is only able to be used by eligible individuals in Australia.

## COVID-19 affected voters calling from Norfolk and Cocos (Keeling) Islands

*Advice provided to Service Officers*

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For callers from Norfolk and Cocos (Keeling) Islands who call and request to be transferred to the COVID-19-affected Secure Telephone Voting service you can do so.

Please note: do not transfer any callers other than from Norfolk and Cocos Islands to the Secure Telephone Service.

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## How is the AEC managing the COVID-19 rules in relation to hygiene and physical distancing?

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has worked closely with the Department of Health to manage the risks around COVID-19 at the next election. If you attend an Early Voting Centre or a Polling Place, you will notice changes from previous elections.

Precautionary measures have been put in place to help protect electors and polling staff, including:

- The number of people allowed in a voting venue will comply with Health guidelines, based on the size of the venue
- Hand sanitiser will be available throughout all Early Voting Centres and Polling Places
- Voting screens, common surfaces and touch points will be cleaned regularly,
- How-to-vote cards will not be used more than once
- A Queue Controller will ensure the room capacity is maintained with safe queue distancing observed
- A Hygiene Officer will also oversee that hygiene is maintained within the polling place
- Bio-waste bins will be provided on site to dispose of used PPE.
- Signage on hygiene and social distancing will be displayed around the polling place as well as floor markers

We are also asking people to bring their own pencil – a big change from past election. Single use pencils will be available if required and can be kept by the voter or disposed of in the bin near the polling place exit.

Physical distancing rules and increased cleaning may mean voting will take a little longer than normal – so make sure you plan ahead.

# Covid-19 Secure Telephone Voting Scripts

## 6pm 18 May to 4pm 20 May

### Telephone voting for COVID-19 affected voters: How to register

#### Eligibility for telephone voting service

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You must meet strict eligibility requirements and register by 4.00pm AEST Saturday 21 May.

#### How to register to vote by phone

Go to [aec.gov.au/covid](https://aec.gov.au/covid) and follow the prompts. This is the quickest way to register. You can also call **1800 413 960**, but there may be lengthy wait times.

##### Step 1

Prepare evidence of being COVID-19 positive. This should be:

- the date and time of your positive PCR test confirmation, and the details of the testing centre or health professional, or
- the date, time, and reference number of your Rapid Antigen Test (RAT). You must have registered your RAT with your state or territory health authority.

##### Step 2

Call **1800 413 960**. You can ask for an interpreter who speaks your language. Have your evidence ready, as during the call you'll be asked to declare that you're unable to attend a polling place because you're isolating with COVID-19. You will also be asked to select a six-digit secure PIN.

##### Step 3

You will be sent an eight-digit phone voting registration number by SMS or email. You will need to use the PIN and registration number when you call to cast your vote, rather than providing your name and address, so your vote remains secret.

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## **People who speak a language other than English**

Information explaining how to register is available in 33 languages at [aec.gov.au/translated](https://aec.gov.au/translated). If you ring **1800 413 960** to register rather than doing this online, you can ask for an interpreter who speaks your language to join the call.

## **Close contacts – no symptoms**

If you're a close contact without symptoms and don't need to isolate, you can still vote in person at a polling place.

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### **Why should I have to vote if I have COVID-19**

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### **Fines for not voting**

You won't be fined if you have a valid and sufficient reason for not voting. This can include because you were COVID-19 positive. If you get a notice, you can write back to explain the reason why you couldn't vote. You should include evidence of being COVID-19 positive and in isolation on election day, Saturday 21 May.

## **I can't find the serial number on my RAT.**

The location will depend on the brand of RAT you used. The number could be on the front or back of the packet, or next to an image or icon. It's ok if you can't find it – but to prove eligibility, you do need to provide the brand and receipt number from the health authority that registered the positive test.

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## What happens to completed ballot papers after I vote by phone? What happens to my personal information?

### What happens to completed ballot papers

The service follows the same process as what happens at polling places. Your ballot papers will be folded and sealed inside an envelope to be put into the ballot box.

### What happens to my personal information

Phone operators are not given your name, address, or phone number. They are only given registration numbers, to protect your privacy.

## I don't want to vote by phone; I want to vote online.

No online voting for federal elections is available, regardless of personal circumstances.

## COVID-19 affected voters calling from Norfolk and Cocos (Keeling) Islands

*Advice provided to Service Officers*

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For callers from Norfolk and Cocos (Keeling) Islands who call and request to be transferred to the COVID-19-affected Secure Telephone Voting service you can do so.

Please note: do not transfer any callers other than from Norfolk and Cocos Islands to the Secure Telephone Service.

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## I'm overseas. Can I use the phone voting service?

No, the phone voting service is only able to be used by eligible individuals in Australia.

# **Covid-19 Secure Telephone Voting Scripts**

## **Prior to 6pm 18 May**

### **Telephone voting for COVID-19 affected voters**

#### **Voting for COVID-19 affected people**

Plan your vote carefully. If you can't make it to a polling place on election day, Saturday 21 May, you may be eligible to vote early at an early voting centre or apply for a postal vote.

If you're affected by COVID-19 and unable to attend a polling place in person, you can apply for a postal vote until 6.00pm Wednesday 18 May. Visit [aec.gov.au/election/pva.htm](https://aec.gov.au/election/pva.htm) to find out how.

#### **Eligibility for telephone voting service**

The service is only for people who're COVID-19 positive and required to isolate on Saturday 21 May. You must meet strict eligibility requirements. More information will be on the AEC website from 6.00pm Wednesday 18 May.

#### **Close contacts**

If you're a close contact without symptoms and don't need to isolate, you can still vote in person at a polling place.