

**Submission
No 18**

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2023 NSW STATE ELECTION AND OTHER
MATTERS**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Thank you to the Committee and readers for the consideration of my submission.

I am a long serving Senior Election Official with the NSW Electoral Commission and the Australian Electoral Commission. I make this submission in a personal capacity and it does not reflect the views of either organisation.

Following are suggestions for and in the lead up to the 2027 NSW State Election.

Early voting period

Return to a 2-week early voting period in line with all other jurisdictions. In parallel, amend the timing of the ballot draw and campaign material registration to allow the Electoral Commission additional time for their operational requirements, eg. ballot paper printing.

Parallel to the above, remove the legislated requirement connected to the 6pm close of voting on the Friday prior to Election Day. There is no reason that early voting requires a legislated ending time for its' final day.

All operating times should be at the discretion of the Electoral Commissioner to best suit the requirements of operations, including the final day of early voting as part of the immediate lead up to Election Day.

Postal Vote Applications

In line with the recent recommendation from the Federal Government's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and moves in other jurisdictions, the NSWEC should take on sole and full responsibility for the entire postal voting application process. Work in collaboration with the AEC to develop a joint postal vote processing process.

Furthermore, take advice from the Electoral Commissioner on the best closing date and time for postal vote applications to be received by.

Counting Legislative Council ballot papers

To improve Election Day staff WHS requirements and to keep an initial primary focus on the counting of LA ballot papers, Legislative Council papers should no longer be preference counted on election night.

On election night at polling places, LC papers should be unfolded, sorted to formal / informal, counted, bundled and boxed as a reconciliation activity. They can then be preference counted from Monday.

On election night at other counting centres (ie. counting of early votes), the focus should be on counting LA ballot papers. As time and staffing permit (not necessarily on election night), LC ballot papers can be unfolded (and then restored) in preparation for counting, ensuring that any misplaced LA ballot papers are recovered. These LC ballot papers can then be counted from Monday.

Single Team Polling Place Management

All voting venues should be staffed by a single team led by a single manager and an allocated number of 2nd managers, regardless of the number of different vote types or ballot papers being issued at said venue.

Senior Office Assistant Roles

If the Electoral Commission continues with the SOA roles, they should be rejigged into a “Staffing” position (staffing) and a “Logistics” position (materials and venues). Furthermore, there should be the option to have multiple SOA’s leading results call-in and post-election day counting, as often your best staff will be running polling places on election day and will usually be the best people to manage your counting afterwards.

Slightly reduce Election Day polling hours

In line with the fall in on-the-day attendance voting and as a WHS measure for election day staff, strongly consider reducing Election Day polling hours by + / - 1 hour. Attendance numbers generally fall away as the day progresses, so some first suggestions would be 8am / 8:30am / 9am to 5pm / 5:30pm.

10-Metre Rule

Every election there are hassles and issues with the 6-metre rule related to handing out of materials. To allow extra space for all stakeholders, particularly voters, extend this area by 4 metres to 10 metres.

Having interacted with thousands of voters over many years, I would anecdotally suggest such a move would be very welcomed by a sizeable cohort of voters.

2 (or 1) Declaration Vote Envelopes

In line with the legislation, there should be two declaration vote envelopes - a “Provisional” envelope (combining the current Enrolment NNOR and NAMAV) and an “Absent” envelope. Consider moving to a single declaration envelope like the AEC uses.

Refresh the form numbering for all NSWEC forms

As titled.

Single electoral employment system

In collaboration with the AEC (and for their use at the 2027/2028 Federal Election), develop a single, persistent, semi-automated (ie. default location-based placement for issuing officers) election employment system. Relatedly and similar to how the NSW Commission has a pool of Senior Election Officials, work with the AEC to develop an ongoing election workforce development initiative.

Voting Place Nomenclature

There are a lot of names used in elections to describe the place you go to vote. “Voting Place” should be used as it’s both formal (the act of voting) and more homely (a place where you go to vote).