

Question on Notice

No. 699

Asked on 14 July 2020

MS S BOLTON ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (HON Y D'ATH) –

QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General advise when there will be clarification on the format for the upcoming state election in terms of postal votes capacity, telephone voting criteria, volunteers at polling booths and other concerns that have been submitted in response to what was experienced during the March local government elections?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Noosa for her question.

On 15 July 2020, the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) published a 'Statement of Intent', which sets out planned election services and health measures to deliver a COVID-safe State general election on 31 October 2020.

The ECQ is currently planning to deliver a 'mixed model' election, featuring expanded in-person and postal voting options, with telephone voting for eligible electors only. In addition, a range of health measures will be put in place, based on measures implemented successfully for the local government elections and in accordance with the advice of Queensland's Chief Health Officer.

Key features of planned election services include:

- expanded voting services to ensure electors have a range of voting options;
- expanded opening hours during early voting from 19-30 October, including an additional day of early voting on Saturday 24 October;
- applications for postal votes to open early, with additional postal vote capacity and streamlined postal vote distribution processes;
- additional capacity for telephone voting, with strict eligibility criteria to ensure this service is available for vulnerable voters who need to use this service;
- special arrangements for 'declared institutions' such as aged care facilities;
- additional capacity for the ECQ call centre; and
- ECQ directions to be issued prior to the election to ensure the safe distribution of how-to-vote cards and other election material and scrutineering of counting on election night and through the vote counting process.

Health measures currently planned to protect the health and safety of electors, staff and political participants include:

- physical distancing measures at all polling places, including maintaining distances of 1.5 metres and using alternate polling screens;
- supplies of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning products to be available at all polling places;
- voters to be encouraged to bring their own pens or pencils;

- additional staff to be employed for queue control and to assist with ensuring physical distancing measures are observed; and
- any additional measures recommended by Queensland's Chief Health Officer.

The ECQ will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 health measures throughout planning for the election, and will continue to work closely with the Chief Health Officer to ensure required protections are put in place. Based on this advice, the ECQ will also consider any necessary changes to the election service delivery model utilising legislative provisions passed by the Queensland Parliament to facilitate the safe conduct of the election.

The Statement of Intent for delivery of the 2020 State general election is available on the ECQ website: <https://www.ecq.qld.gov.au> and further election information will be published progressively leading up to the election.