



ECANZ submission to The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Postal Services Modernisation – Discussion Paper

Purpose

To present the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) submission to Australia Post's Postal Services Modernisation consultation.

Key Considerations

1. Electoral commissions operate under regulatory frameworks which require the use of the letter service, with the most important of these services relating to postal voting in elections. The letter service is a critical voting service which would be challenging and expensive to replace by digital channels or transitioned to digital alternatives.
2. The enfranchisement of Australian postal voters relies on an effective, efficient, and reasonably priced letter service. Any change to the letter service must be carefully constructed to avoid negatively impacting electors' political participation, causing delay in the declaration of election results, or diminishing their trust in the integrity of electoral processes within Australia.

About ECANZ

ECANZ is a consultative council of the Electoral Commissioners from electoral management bodies (EMBs) of the Commonwealth, States and Territories of Australia and New Zealand.

The [ECANZ Charter 2022-2024](#) sets out its purpose, key principles and focus areas, and identifies key contemporary and emerging risks, challenges and opportunities faced by electoral authorities.

Background

The ECANZ's purpose is to ensure that the work and role of electoral commissions is better understood and properly resourced at the heart of democratic systems that enjoy the trust and confidence of political participants and citizens alike. Its value is based on the ability to harness collective expertise and experience to engage the common issues and shared concerns to protect and enhance the integrity and performance of electoral systems across Australia and New Zealand.

This submission is provided to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts with this purpose at its core.

It is important to note that ECANZ does not intend, through this submission, to comment on government policy, but rather based on its operational experience and expertise, seeks to highlight matters for government consideration with a particular focus on the need for an efficient and cost-effective national letters service that can continue to support electoral services into the future.

Electoral commissions in all Australian jurisdictions are legislatively required to make voting accessible through a variety of service offerings, including by postal ballot for all eligible voters. Australian electors continue to demand



convenient voting methods. These demands have driven electoral commissions to modernise and design voter services that are responsive to the varied and complex community needs. Consideration must be given to electors who rely on voting methods other than traditional in-person voting at a polling booth. Electors such as the infirm, those suffering an impairment which may prevent physical attendance at a polling booth or those who live a considerable distance from a polling booth, require the provision of alternatives to attendance voting. Postal voting is an important and heavily utilised alternative.

In some instances, entire elections must be conducted by post, including:

- Local Government elections in Western Australia conducted under the Local Government Act 1995 (WA), where the Local Government has declared that the Electoral Commissioner be responsible for the postal election.
- In Queensland, under the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 (Qld), a Council may apply to the Minister to have their election conducted in whole or part as a postal ballot – 16 councils had full postal elections in the 2020 local government quadrennial elections as a result.
- Local Government elections in Tasmania, conducted under the Local Government Act 1993 (TAS), are conducted as state-wide, universal postal elections. The introduction of compulsory voting for local government elections in 2022 solidifies the need for robust mail services within the state.
- In Victoria, Local Government elections have been determined by the Minister for Local Government under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic) to be conducted via post and would require a legislative amendment to change.
- In South Australia, Council Elections conducted under the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA) are required to be conducted as postal-only, however are non-compulsory to vote in.

The Electoral Regulation Research Network (ERRN), which undertakes considerable research relating to electoral regulation, highlighted in a research report from December 2018, “Implications of Changes to Voting Channels in Australia”,¹ that “for the foreseeable future, different voters will want to use different voting channels”, and “one way of facilitating this would be to open access to the four most common voting channels – ordinary voting on election day, pre-poll voting, **postal voting** and remote electronic voting – to anyone who wants to use them”. The research includes “A Review of Convenience Voting in the State of Victoria”,² which found that postal voting is one of the voting methods cited by research participants, along with pre-poll voting, that “engendered a superior experience compared to election day”.

While this submission focusses primarily on the letter service in Australia, ECANZ acknowledges that similar considerations exist in the New Zealand context,³ and recognises that New Zealand voters within Australia rely on the Australian letter service to vote in their national and local government elections.⁴ ECANZ also notes that changes to the reliability of letter services and the capacity of postal services have stimulated service re-design to reduce

¹ Refer <https://law.unimelb.edu.au/centres/errn/research/research-projects/implications-of-changes-to-voting-in-australia-project>.

² Refer https://law.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2902152/Convenience-Voting-Report-1-October-2018.pdf.

³ For example, the Electoral Commission New Zealand notes that “An ongoing challenge for the Commission is our current reliance on the postal service, which is diminishing and becoming increasingly expensive” (p46) <https://elections.nz/assets/2020-general-election/Report-of-the-Electoral-Commission-on-the-2020-General-Election-and-referendums.pdf>

⁴ Refer <https://vote.nz/voting/how-to-vote/vote-from-overseas/> and p31 of <https://elections.nz/assets/2020-general-election/Report-of-the-Electoral-Commission-on-the-2020-General-Election-and-referendums.pdf>



reliance on postal communication in New Zealand .⁵ Such an approach may be required by Australian electoral commissions grappling with similar changes to reliability and capacity with the postal service, subject to any constraints that remain in their regulatory frameworks.

Key Issues for Consideration

Elections are an essential service, and ECANZ members deliver federal, state and territory, local and non-government/fee-for-service elections. At any one time, it is likely that significant electoral events are occurring across Australia and New Zealand and/or that electoral events with lower profiles (such as fee-for-service elections) are being delivered. While the regulatory frameworks for these elections vary between jurisdictions, the reliance on the letter service as a core delivery channel within Australia, and between Australia and New Zealand, is a constant. The matters outlined below should be read with this context in mind.

ECANZ members also acknowledge the challenges faced by remote First Nations communities, including barriers to candidacy exacerbated by a lack of banking facilities, and this is addressed below, related to the community services accessed by so many Australians through the Australia Post network. It is important that the postal service modernisation considers opportunities to address identified and ongoing barriers to better support remote communities, with a particular focus on remote First Nations communities, given the disproportionate impact that a decline in the postal service has on these communities.

In the context of Australian elections, ECANZ members use Australia Post's letter services for a range of key functions, including the following (in no particular order of importance):

- Providing electors with postal ballot packs during all electoral events (Federal, State and Territory, local government, and non-government/fee-for-service). Electors who receive postal ballots may in some jurisdictions be first time postal voters or registered General Postal Voters (GPVs) who have demonstrated they are unable to access alternative voting services (e.g. having a silent elector status, being infirm or ill, incarcerated or from living 20+ kilometres from any polling place).
- The return of completed postal ballots by electors, which can lead to delays in declarations. The speed of the count is an important issue as it relates directly to community expectations of a swift result. Delays in declarations can lead to community uncertainty, and in more extreme cases, distrust in the process
- Delivery of electoral awareness material to each household or each elector ahead of, or in the early stages of, electoral events.
- Compliance activities such as the delivery of 'failure to vote' notices, noting electoral commissions are generally restricted to using the mailing address recorded on the electoral roll to initiate contact with enrolled citizens.
- Communicating with electors about enrolment activities, including new and changed enrolment details. On this matter, ECANZ notes that the forthcoming Australian referendum is likely to stimulate significant use of the letter service by stakeholders engaged in the referendum and providing critical information.

The table at **Appendix 1** contains relevant statistical information highlighting the use of postal voting across each Australian electoral jurisdiction (i.e., state, territory and federal). Pre-COVID statistics have been used purposely to display the 'normal' usage of postal voting at elections. The Committee should note that the increased reliance on

⁵ Refer p3 of *Report of the Electoral Commission on the 2020 General Election and referendums* <https://elections.nz/assets/2020-general-election/Report-of-the-Electoral-Commission-on-the-2020-General-Election-and-referendums.pdf>.



non-attendance voting methods, such as postal and telephone voting, that was experienced during the public health emergency, is a trend that is continuing. This was demonstrated recently in the 2022 Victorian State Election where there was a 50.55% increase in postal voting applications compared to the 2018 State Election. Postal votes issued totalled 530,570, or 12.07% of eligible electors in the 2022 Victorian State Election. As such, it is important to consider the significant role that the letter service is likely to play in future election delivery, in the event of future crises and, as a result, their classification as a core business continuity measure.

ECANZ members rely on the letter service to provide awareness of electoral events in line with their obligations to ensure all Australians are aware of their right and responsibility to vote at an electoral event. For example, in federal elections, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) rely on the letter delivery service as one means of ensuring each household is provided with vital information about the election. Other electoral commissions send a voter information card/letter to an enrolled person's address in the days prior to the commencement of voting.

Letter delivery services are a key component of various regulatory functions which electoral commissions rely upon to fulfil their legislative responsibilities. For instance, the letter service is used to contact enrolled persons who have failed to vote at elections. The correspondence for these compliance programs can include legal documents such as infringement notices with immutable deadlines for response, after which time a matter may escalate with a commensurate increase in the value of the penalty imposed, or a summons to appear in court.

At Australian elections, voting by postal ballot is a valid and convenient way for an eligible person to cast their vote. In some elections, legislation directs all voting to be conducted by postal ballot. In essence, this means electoral commissions rely upon the timely and cost-effective delivery of postal ballots to all enrolled citizens within an electoral district. In these instances, electors are not offered any alternative method of voting, and the timely delivery of postal ballots to the elector, and their subsequent return to the electoral commission through Australia Post's letter service, is essential to the election's successful delivery (see *Case Study 1* below).

Case Study 1 – Northern Territory Electoral Commission – Postal Application Cut-off

In some instances, there are highly prescriptive regulatory timeframes related to the receipt of a person's application for a postal ballot for an election.

For example, where the postal delivery address is outside of Australia, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is required to send postal voting papers to an applicant if the completed application is received before 5pm four (4) days before election day. That timeframe is reduced to only two (2) days before election day, where an application is received for postal ballots to be sent to an address within Australia. All voting must be complete by 6pm on election day, and so even with the regularity of priority paid letter services currently in place, the NTEC must consider ways in which to reduce the risk of postal ballots being received too late for the elector to complete and returned in time to be admitted to the final count.

Impact

Any change to the regularity of letter delivery services will have a real and direct impact on the NTEC's ability to deliver postal ballots on time.

The Postal Services Modernisation Discussion Paper (the Discussion Paper) highlights the disruption that the letter service has experienced, and while it acknowledges that a Community Service Obligation (CSO) currently exists to supply a letter service, it does not outline whether this CSO is being successfully met by Australia Post, particularly



given the pivot towards parcels. A frank assessment of this is central to the consideration of what a letter service should look like going forward, in particular, with respect to the need to support the delivery of elections. Given the importance of the letter service to the integrity of the electoral process, and with it sometimes being the only voting channel available, supporting the delivery of elections could be considered a CSO.

ECANZ members have first-hand experience of this in the context of postal voting. Its members have experienced significant risks in effectively delivering their statutory obligations related to postal voting using the letter service in recent elections, including successfully enfranchising electors who rely on this service to cast their votes. During the height of the COVID pandemic, when Australia Post's Performance Standards were relaxed by the then federal Government (as set out on p14 of the Discussion Paper), significant electoral events were being delivered. The relaxation of those Performance Standards had a dramatic impact on electoral service delivery, requiring the implementation of complex contingency measures by ECANZ members. the cost of which we fully absorbed by those members (see *Case Study 2* below). In that context, it is arguable whether, as the Discussion Paper sets out (p14), "letter services were maintained".

The Discussion Paper (p6) states that "the Government considers that amending letter delivery Performance Standards to reflect current and future usage and changing letter pricing to reflect the actual cost to Australia Post of providing letter services, can support Australia Post's financial sustainability so that it can continue to invest in the broad range of postal services required by the Australian community". The ECANZ acknowledges the need to consider such matters but notes that, from its perspective, it would be desirable to establish what the letter service *standard* should be and then support Australia Post to deliver to that standard and price accordingly, being mindful of what the *usage* is, or is likely to be, going forward.

Case Study 2 – Queensland State General Election 2020 – Postal Hubs

In March 2020, the Queensland local government elections were held in exceptional circumstances due to the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent declaration of a public health emergency. As a result, the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) witnessed an immediate and significant rise in the number of electors applying for a postal ballot. The rate of postal voting for this election increased by 41% compared to the previous local government election in 2016, despite overall voter turnout reducing.

The public health emergency remained in place after the March local government elections, and the ECQ therefore planned for an even higher number of postal vote applications to be received at the October 2020 State General election. Adding complexity, in June 2020, Australia Post announced the suspension of its priority paid mail service, which would have a demonstrable impact on the conduct of the election.

Generally, completed postal ballots are returned by electors via the priority paid mail service directly to each of the 93 Returning Officers located across Queensland. Upon receipt, the Returning Officer is required to scrutinise the returned postal declaration and, if accepted, the ballot paper is extracted from the envelope and included in the counting process.

The ECQ identified a risk relating to the potential for postal ballots lodged with Australia Post by electors not being received within the legislated requirement of 10 days after election day, as a direct result of the suspended priority paid mail service. Should this risk have been realised, it would have resulted in a significant number of electors being disenfranchised. For clarity, postal ballots received at any point after the cut-off date and time contained within the election timetable are unable to be included in the counting process.



To address this risk, the ECQ designed and implemented two ‘postal vote hubs’ located in Brisbane and Townsville. The intent of the hubs was to redirect returned postal ballots to either of the two hubs, instead of to each of the 93 Returning Officers. This design effectively reduced the number of days it would take for a postal ballot to be in the ECQ’s direct control at a postal hub, where it was then processed, sorted, and dispatched by courier to the relevant district’s Returning Officer. This not only expedited the receipt of postal ballots by the ECQ, but it potentially saved many thousands of postal ballots from being received by a Returning Officer outside of the 10-day legislated timeframe.

The Postal Vote Hub project cost the ECQ more than \$1 million, contributing to a 39.5% increase in the cost per postal ballot when compared with previous state elections in Queensland.

Impact

The delay in return of postal ballots from electors back to an electoral commission can both impact the cost of election delivery and put at risk the on-time receipt of postal ballots within legislated timeframes, resulting in electors being disenfranchised.

Current *usage* of the letter service, therefore, is one of many factors to consider. Another is the regulatory *reliance* that ECANZ members have on the letter service. In this regard, most elections in most Australian jurisdictions are compulsory, many of these elections are delivered solely or predominantly as postal elections, and all have electoral timetables that are enshrined in legislation. The primary issue identified by ECANZ members relates to the dissonance that exists between their current statutory obligations to provide postal voting services to electors using Australia Post’s letter service, and the contemporary service standards which often lead to this service being less effective and efficient than it needs to be. From an electoral perspective this, and with reference to the case studies above, results in a letter service being delivered which often does not currently meet the standard set out in the related Community Service Obligation unless supplemented by significant investment from electoral commissions.

The standard under consideration must therefore reflect not just current and future usage but electoral commissions’ ongoing reliance on the letter service to deliver essential electoral services.

Digital channels can complement but cannot replace a letter service

The Discussion Paper (p4) notes that “the use of letters services will continue to decline, driven by customer migration to increasingly accessible, affordable and sophisticated digital alternatives”. It further notes (p13) that “it is expected that these organisations [businesses and governments] will increasingly use digital communication channels to engage with their customers and stakeholders, accelerating the decline in letter volumes”.

While this may be accurate in terms of general engagement/communication practices, this “customer migration” is not necessarily relevant to the use of the letter service by ECANZ members and electors for postal voting given the reliance on this service to conduct postal voting and raise electoral awareness. As set out above, the key concern from ECANZ’s perspective is that Australia Post is already currently challenged to provide a letter service which supports its members in discharging their statutory obligations at a cost that is acceptable to governments and their clients. There is therefore a need to better align the letter service offering from Australia Post with the regulatory frameworks which ECANZ members and electors are compelled to implement and use, especially given it is a monopoly service.

The regulatory framework under which electoral commissions operate does not generally support the use of digital services as a valid replacement to postal or any other voting method, with some exceptions (e.g., some jurisdictions



allow non-attendance voting to be conducted using securely emailed voting materials that, once completed, can be uploaded in secure portals). Currently, however, the ongoing integrity of elections within Australia and New Zealand generally relies upon a completed hard copy ballot paper being produced and handled in line with strict procedures and in sight of independent scrutineers. This is not expected to change in the foreseeable future.

The cost of delivering elections is significantly increasing

The Discussion Paper states (p13) that “the key to ensuring sustainable, secure employment will therefore be to ensure postal delivery officers support viable, revenue generating services” and (p16) “an option for Australia Post is to increase the Basic Postage Rate (BPR), as well as bulk letter pricing, to align with its international peers and better reflect the costs of providing letters”.

The ECANZ acknowledges the likelihood of this, and simply notes that such a change would contribute to an overall increase in the cost of election delivery, especially where postal voting is the sole or predominant channel available for voting. In some jurisdictions, such as Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, certain elections are legislatively required to be conducted on a cost recovery basis from the relevant entities including local governments, and in those scenarios such increases must be passed on. These costs in turn are passed on to electors, for instance through increased costs from councils to their ratepayers.

A further issue arises when advice about cost increases is provided with relatively short notice ahead of an election event which is conducted on a cost recovery basis. As is currently occurring in Western Australia, Local Governments have already approved their budget allocations for the October 2023 elections, but the Electoral Commission has now been advised of a cost increase effective July 2023. Without any relief from Australia Post, the WA Electoral Commission must look to find internal cost savings in order to meet the costs of this increase.

Responses to feedback requests

The Discussion Paper (p17) requests feedback on the following, with each addressed in turn.

Letters pricing arrangements

The ECANZ acknowledges that Australia Post may need to adjust its pricing arrangements in the face of a declining customer base for its letter service.

At the same time, ECANZ welcomes clarity on what these price arrangements may look like over an 8-10 year period to ensure its members are able to effectively accommodate price increases into their budget estimates and forecasting.

Further to this, ECANZ suggests that it is time to consider whether, in providing postal voting as an essential social service to Australian and New Zealand electors, its members should be subject to a discounted and consistent pricing arrangement across all jurisdictions that better reflects the fact that its members represent a unique client base using the service to discharge legislative obligations that enfranchise both domestic and overseas voters.

Letter delivery frequency and speed

The concept of relaxing letter delivery frequency requirements is inconsistent with the postal voting service which ECANZ members must provide. Such a relaxation threatens the viability of that voting channel which, for many Australian electors in rural and remote areas, represents the only available and cost-effective means of voting. In turn, that threatens their enfranchisement in the Australian electoral system. This is a human rights consideration worth considering in the context of any proposed reforms.



Similarly, a standard which commits Australia Post to guaranteed letter delivery speeds is essential to the viability of this voting channel, and most especially to the return of postal votes for inclusion in the vote count.

A particular reliance upon letter delivery frequency and speed is prevalent during the counting and declaration period of elections, which commences from the close of polling on election day at most electoral events. An expedient counting process moving toward a declaration is the definitive point in the election event where a candidate finds out if they are the elected representative, and the collective result yields the likely composition of an incoming administration, whether that be along party lines or otherwise. The speed of the count is a strategic issue for EMBs as it aligns to community expectations for a swift result, abating community uncertainty about the incoming administration and the potential for community distrust in the electoral process.

Electoral commissions will only declare the outcome of an electoral contest when there is absolute certainty. Therefore, they must consider the number of postal ballots not yet available to count when deciding to make a declaration. The return of postal ballots on a regular, daily basis during the declaration period is crucial to enable the process of declaring elected candidates to be completed as quickly as possible, when that declaration is reliant upon the return of postal ballots.

Deregulating the priority letter service

The Discussion Paper (p17) seeks views on the idea of “deregulating the priority letter service, while maintaining a commercial bulk priority letter service to meet the needs of Australian businesses”.

This is not a matter that ECANZ is positioned to comment on. However, ECANZ notes that such deregulation could result in more providers being available to provide this essential service to electoral commissions, and perhaps at a more competitive price than is currently made available to commissions by Australia Post, though that is a highly uncertain prospect without further modelling being done by the Commonwealth Government. ECANZ would also simply note that such a deregulation process could result in a highly disruptive transitional period that would need to be carefully managed to avoid any adverse outcomes for election delivery.

Accessibility of services

The Discussion Paper asks (p26, entitled *Key points – Post Offices and accessibility*), “are there other services Australia Post could provide to better support the community?”.

ECANZ considers the current lack of easily accessible banking services in remote communities to be a barrier to participation in the electoral process where such a service is relied upon by political participants (e.g., in Queensland a candidate in a local government must establish a dedicated campaign bank account). The Discussion Paper (p23) states “there are more than 1,800 ‘Bank@Post’ offices in rural and remote locations, and the Regional Banking Taskforce found that over 1,150 of these are in communities with no bank branch and play a particularly important role in providing in-person banking services in regional communities”.

Electoral commissions are tasked with ensuring the democratic process of elections, including candidacy, are accessible for all eligible citizens in all locations across Australia. As a result, ECANZ members are aware of significant challenges faced especially in remote First Nations communities by the lack of banking facilities. The lack of banking facilities, exacerbated by the intermittent provision of, or in some cases an almost complete lack of, reliable internet services, is a barrier to candidacy. Australia Post may consider extending ‘Bank@Post’ services to these communities to better support the community and in turn support the accessibility of the electoral process for intending candidates no matter their location.



Conclusion

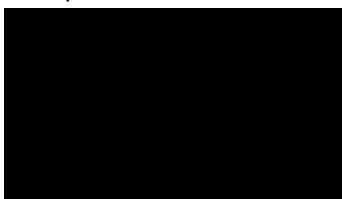
Through this submission, ECANZ has sought to highlight issues that its members face with the Australia Post letter delivery service as it currently stands, based on real-world examples of delivering a dependent essential service, as well as highlight risks and opportunities to reform in this area from its perspective. The ECANZ would like to recognise Australia Post, as the supplier of the postal vote channel, has been and will continue to be a critical partner in delivering democracy; enshrining this as a CSO would create public confidence in the continuing security of this channel and the ongoing enfranchisement of all voters reliant on postal voting.

ECANZ has sought to ensure that in considering the future of the letter service, two matters are sufficiently considered by the Commonwealth Government and by Australia Post:

1. Electoral commissions operate under regulatory frameworks which require the use of the letter service, with the most important of these services relating to postal voting in elections. The letter service is a critical voting service, with the demand for postal services increasing, the postal service offering is not necessarily easily or inexpensively replaced by digital channels or transitioned to digital alternatives.
2. The enfranchisement of Australian and New Zealand postal voters in a range of elections relies on an effective, efficient, and reasonably priced letter service. Any change to the letter service – whether that be through deregulation, increases in price, reductions in frequency, or diminishment of speed – must be carefully constructed to avoid negatively impacting electors' political participation, causing delay in the declaration of election results or diminishing their trust in the integrity of electoral processes within Australia and New Zealand.

The ECANZ would welcome an opportunity to meet with the team conducting this review to discuss its submission and provide any further clarifying information required.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the Postal Services Modernisation Discussion Paper.



Mick Sherry

Electoral Commissioner, Electoral Commission of South Australia

Chair, Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand



APPENDIX 1

The information contained within this table reflects postal votes issued as a percentage of enrolment for two electoral events prior to COVID for each Australian electoral commission.

The total number of postal votes at these elections was 5,520,291, which is 8.89% of the number of enrolled electors at the same time of the election. This highlights the reliance on postal voting for Australian electors.

Electoral Commission	Electoral event year	Postal votes issued	Enrolment	Per centage of postal votes against enrolment
Australian Electoral Commission	2016	1,510,643	15,671,551	9.64%
	2019	1,538,129	16,419,543	9.37%
New South Wales Electoral Commission*	2015	291,429	5,040,662	5.78%
	2019	248,299	5,271,775	4.71%
Victorian Electoral Commission	2014	332,697	3,806,301	8.74%
	2018	352,409	4,139,326	8.51%
Electoral Commission of Queensland	2016 (referendum)	397,551	3,083,593	12.89%
	2017	317,672	3,229,436	9.83%
Western Australian Electoral Commission	2013	98,715	1,412,533	6.99%
	2017	158,732	1,593,222	9.96%
Electoral Commission of South Australia	2014	84,147	1,142,419	7.3%
	2018	95,191	1,201,775	7.9%
Elections ACT	2012	12,209	256,702	4.76%
	2016	16,925	283,162	5.98%
Tasmanian Electoral Commission	2014	27,087	366,442	7.39%
	2018	26,476	381,183	6.95%
Northern Territory Electoral Commission	2012	5,314	123,805	4.29%
	2016	6,666	135,506	4.9%
		5,520,291	63,558,936	8.69%

* The NSWEC used iVote as an alternative voting service in the 2015 and 2019 NSW State Elections. In 2015, 283,669 votes were cast through the iVote software. In 2019, 234,401 votes were cast through the iVote software. In the 2023 NSW State election, the first election after the iVote software was removed, there was an increase of 291,909 postal votes as electors continued to seek out or require alternative voting services. Overall, this resulted in 540,208 total postal vote applications – 9.78% of eligible electors.