

MEDIA RELEASE

New Telephone Voting Standard for Australian Elections

The Electoral Council of Australia (ECA), a consultative council of Commonwealth, States and Territories Electoral Commissioners, announced today it has developed a common standard for telephone voting.

The Standard has been designed to assist specific and special categories of electors including those who are blind or have low vision, where legislation permits this flexibility. The standard does not signal any change to the existing voting method required under electoral laws and familiar to the overwhelming majority of Australian electors of marking a ballot paper at a polling place or via a postal vote

In deciding upon a standard the ECA hopes over time to promote a similar voting experience for these voters across state, territory and federal elections.

Mr Ed Killesteyn, Chair of the ECA and Australian Electoral Commissioner said that it is the first time a common electoral standard had been formally agreed by state, territory and federal Electoral Commissioners.

“The Telephone Voting Standard provides a reference document should an Electoral Commission be permitted or required by law to implement a method of voting by telephone,” Mr Killesteyn said.

“The Telephone Voting Standard is not compulsory but is available to guide any electoral authority who needs to implement telephone voting either within a voting centre or from the privacy of the voter’s home” Mr Killesteyn said.

Recent state, territory and federal electoral events have seen increased dialogue between parliaments, electoral commissions and blindness and disability organisations geared to providing improved accessible, secret and independent voting.

Responses have varied from supplying voting kiosks, Braille and large print ballot papers and telephone assisted voting.

In developing the telephone voting standard the ECA found that goals of an accessible, secret and independent solution had much in common with expectations around telephone banking services. That is, the service needed to be accessible from the privacy of the home as well as being as secure as a banking service.

The ECA accepted the recommendations from a series of focus groups conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission with blind and low vision communities on acceptable methods of voting.

The Telephone Voting Standard is now available on the ECA website for download at www.eca.gov.au

Media Contact
Judy Birkenhead
ECA Secretary

03 9584 8831

28 October 2010