



*Electoral Council of  
Australia & New Zealand*

# Charter

**2016 - 2020**

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# Charter 2016-2020

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (**ECANZ**) is a consultative council of the Electoral Commissioners (each an **Electoral Commissioner** or together, **Electoral Commissioners**) from electoral authorities of the Commonwealth, States and Territories of Australia and New Zealand.
- 1.2 The Charter sets out the continuing commitment of ECANZ to the issues surrounding electoral integrity and all matters relating to electoral administration for member electoral authorities.
- 1.3 It also identifies the shared challenges electoral authorities are currently facing and the key areas of ECANZ focus to meet those challenges over the next five years.
- 1.4 This document also provides the framework for the management of ECANZ and the administrative arrangements for council sessions.

## 2 Purpose

- 2.1 ECANZ is a forum through which Electoral Commissioners can:
  - collaborate on a range of electoral issues and, where practicable, formulate a joint view on electoral policy and operational matters of mutual interest
  - promote best practice electoral administration by considering policies and procedures within Australia and New Zealand and other overseas electoral jurisdictions
  - promote and/or undertake research into contemporary electoral issues aimed at improving consistency, convenience and accessibility for all eligible electors
  - establish working parties to consider issues and report back to ECANZ
  - encourage mutual and co-operative development, and sharing of, information technology resources, electoral administration systems and intellectual property associated with such systems and procedures to minimise costs to each member
  - publish or distribute any reports or research with the consent of members – this may involve seeking input from any person or organisation that it considers appropriate
  - engage in shared personal development and learning opportunities

- 2.2 ECANZ will be governed in accordance with the terms of this Charter.
- 2.3 Whilst it is anticipated that members will work together in harmonisation and collaboration to reach common goals and meet the needs and expectation of stakeholders, no member is bound to implement any decision or recommendation of ECANZ.

### **3 Principles**

- 3.1 The following guiding principles underpin this document:
- integrity
  - transparency
  - accessibility
  - protection of the franchise
  - responsiveness
  - an elector centric outlook

### **4 Challenges**

- 4.1 The shared challenges confronting electoral authorities include:
- a) ongoing efforts to ensure procedural compliance by election officials to maintain electoral integrity, all within a highly complex and visible external environment
  - b) the highly prescriptive legislation, governing how electoral authorities administer all aspects of electoral activities
  - c) how to drive performance improvement in election service delivery
  - d) impact of new technologies and community expectations in relation to election service delivery
  - e) extent of voter disengagement as evidenced by declining participation that exists in our communities
  - f) disenfranchisement that exists in our communities
  - g) for the Australian members, managing differing electoral administrative processes as a result of the legislative differences that exist at federal, state and local levels

### **5 Focus Areas**

- 5.1 In addressing these challenges, four areas of focus will drive ECANZ activities over the next five years.

### ***Consistency***

- 5.2 ECANZ will strive to provide electors with a consistent electoral experience when they are engaging with electoral authorities at the federal, state or local government level.
- 5.3 ECANZ members recognise that this may be impacted by the legislative differences that exist between jurisdictions and the right and responsibility of an Electoral Commissioner to conduct the business of their Electoral Management Body as they deem appropriate.

### ***Convenience***

- 5.4 ECANZ will aim to meet community expectations by collaborating on more convenient enrolment and voting services that make it as easy as possible for people to comply with their electoral obligations. The aim of providing more convenient services for voters must be balanced with the responsibility of maintaining a high level of integrity for all electoral services.
- 5.5 The changing needs and expectations of communities, and elector convenience, may be addressed through the identification of opportunities to introduce technology and innovations that will enhance the delivery of enrolment and voting services. ECANZ members note that legislative changes may be required to enable this responsive approach.

### ***Accessibility***

- 5.6 ECANZ will proactively address the issues and concerns regarding ease of access to services allowing:
  - a) electors to enrol and vote
  - b) candidates to nominate
  - c) political parties to be registered
  - d) media to be able to report on elections and electoral matters.
- 5.7 This may be addressed by working in consultation and partnership with the relevant stakeholders to manage ongoing needs and expectations regarding the ease of access to electoral services. It may also be addressed by working to develop broad principles that ensure a consistent delivery of electoral services across all electoral jurisdictions.

### ***Collaboration***

- 5.8 ECANZ will work cooperatively and collaboratively to ensure that electoral practices continue to be forward looking, innovative and responsive in meeting the needs of all stakeholders. All members of ECANZ understand the importance of delivering trusted, consistently reliable, high quality and high integrity electoral events and services.

- 5.9 This Charter recognises that, from time-to-time, Electoral Commissioners will need to make decisions independently as they deem appropriate. However, as demonstrated by other councils and working groups across Australia and New Zealand, the ECANZ will aim to work together in harmonisation and collaboration to reach common goals and meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders.
- 5.10 ECANZ will convene working groups to provide the opportunity for members to share better practices in delivering electoral services.

## **6 Administrative arrangements**

### ***Composition***

- 6.1 ECANZ shall consist of the Electoral Commissioner from each Commonwealth, State and Territory of Australia and New Zealand.
- 6.2 Electoral Commissioners may nominate a senior staff member from their organisation to attend meetings in place of the Electoral Commissioner.
- 6.3 ECANZ may call upon electoral issue specialists to assist with reporting, facilitating discussion and presentations on particular issues, and they may be invited to attend a meeting.

### ***Chair***

- 6.4 Members will elect a rotating Chair who will serve for a period of at least 12 months or for such period as agreed by members. A member may decline to take a turn at being Chair.
- 6.5 The Chair will preside at each meeting of ECANZ for twelve months. The Chair may, if necessary, appoint another member to act as Chair.

### ***Meetings Schedule***

- 6.6 At the first meeting of the calendar year, ECANZ members will agree upon a schedule of meetings for the year and a list of priorities. Unless the membership agrees otherwise, ECANZ will meet at least three times a year (every four months), with an option for additional meetings, as necessary.
- 6.7 Meetings will be face to face; video conferencing is considered a viable alternative to a face to face meeting where appropriate or necessary.

### ***Quorum***

- 6.8 At least six ECANZ members (Commissioners or their appointed delegates) are required for a quorum. In the absence of a quorum the meeting will be rescheduled to a date no more than four weeks hence, unless members agree to cancel the meeting.

### ***Secretariat***

- 6.9 The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) will be responsible for providing secretariat support to the Chair, and to facilitate meetings including preparing the agenda and recording minutes. The Chair may arrange for another Electoral Commission to provide secretariat support where it is deemed more convenient to do so or on any occasion the AEC is not in a position to assist.

### ***Agendas and Minutes***

- 6.10 The ECANZ secretariat shall ensure that a draft agenda, as well as other agenda items, are circulated to ECANZ members for comment three weeks prior to meeting.
- 6.11 A final agenda, together with any supporting documentation, will be circulated to members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.
- 6.12 The Chair will approve the agenda prior to its circulation.
- 6.13 Except with the permission of the Chair, late papers or agenda items will not be accepted.
- 6.14 All papers for circulation should be received by the secretariat at least eight working days before the meeting to allow for timely collation and distribution.
- 6.15 An accurate record of each meeting (including minutes) is to be maintained and, with approval of the Chair, circulated promptly to ECANZ members.
- 6.16 Minutes will be approved at the following ECANZ meeting.
- 6.17 As far as possible, documentation associated with the conduct of ECANZ will be electronic.

### ***Application***

- 6.18 On an annual basis ECANZ will review the content of this document and agree on the key activities that will be undertaken during the forthcoming year.

### ***Members to Bear Own Costs***

- 6.19 Members will pay their own costs associated with being a member, including attending meetings, participating in workshops or undertaking reviews.
- 6.20 Members may, by mutual agreement, contribute funds and/or resources to any project on such terms and conditions as may be agreed from time to time.



## *Dissolution*

6.21 Members may collectively resolve to dissolve ECANZ at any time.