

Letter from ACQSC and Australian Electoral Commission regarding the upcoming referendum and COVID-19 entry approach for mobile polling staff

Dear aged care providers

In late 2023, Australians will have their say in a referendum about whether to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

It is important that everyone who is eligible can vote and that the Australian Government, through the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), has measures in place so that older people in residential aged care are able to vote on site.

We are seeking your assistance to ensure that residents and workers who are eligible to vote are supported to do so. All Australian citizens aged over 18 must vote. If an individual has a progressive disease such as a dementia where they are no longer able to understand the importance of voting, their family, carer or legal representative can assist them to amend their status on the electoral roll.

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the AEC request your support of AEC staff entering your residential aged care homes so that your residents can vote in the referendum via mobile polling. Mobile polling teams deliver in-person voting services to residents at their aged care home. This service may be provided in a communal area or, where required for high needs residents, as a bed-to-bed service.

We know that COVID-19 is still circulating in the community and that older people, including those living in residential aged care homes, are particularly vulnerable to infection. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of aged care providers to ensure the health and wellbeing of your residents and staff. We assure you that the health and safety of all involved in the mobile polling process is our priority.

The AEC has been working with the Department of Health and Aged Care to determine the appropriate COVID-19 safety measures for AEC staff prior to entering your residential aged care home to provide this in-person voting service. The AEC will request mobile polling staff to:

- be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations to aid protection for themselves and residents and staff.
- have a current influenza vaccination.
- have a negative rapid antigen test (RAT) result each day prior to entering an aged care home.
- wear face masks while on-site.

The AEC will be supplying RATs to mobile polling staff to support this practice. We understand you may also ask AEC staff to provide evidence of a negative RAT on-site at your service before entering.

AEC staff will not be allowed to enter residential aged care homes if they have any COVID-19 or flu symptoms.

If your residential aged care home is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak around the time of the scheduled mobile polling, AEC staff will work with you to determine the best approach.

We ask that you refer to this letter as evidence of the measures AEC staff will be taking to meet the COVID-19 entry requirements to perform their role in this year's referendum and facilitate entry of the mobile polling team into your establishment.

These safety measures seek to mitigate the risk to residents, staff or AEC staff of contracting or transmitting COVID-19 or other infectious diseases during mobile polling. We appreciate that aged care providers are responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their residents and staff. If you have any concerns about these arrangements, please contact the AEC on 13 23 26

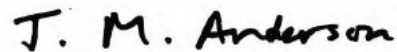
We thank you for your support to enable your residents to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming referendum.

Yours sincerely



Natasha Scandrett
Assistant Commissioner
Delivery and Support Branch
Australian Electoral Commission

15 August 2023



Janet Anderson PSM
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner

15 August 2023