

COVID-19 GUIDELINE

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Campaigning and scrutineering

Candidates, campaigners and scrutineers

This document has been produced in consultation with the NT Department of Health (DOH) and is subject to change.

Purpose

This document has been developed to provide guidance to candidates, campaigners and scrutineers for the 2020 Territory Election. The guidance applies to candidates, campaigners and scrutineers at election day voting centres, early voting centres, including in remote locations, and scrutiny centres.

Changes to the usual campaigning and scrutineering processes are necessary to comply with social distancing and hygiene principles developed by DOH.

Guiding Principles

These are general principles that apply to all Territorians, including candidates, campaigners and scrutineers.

Physical distancing

- A minimum space of 1.5 metres between people who aren't from the same household.
- If there is a requirement to be facing another person less than 1.5 metres away, minimise contact to less than 15 minutes.

Hygiene

- Do not campaign or attend a voting or scrutiny centre (also known as counting centre) if unwell. People who are unwell or with symptoms including fever, cough, runny nose, sore or scratchy throat and shortness of breath, should go home immediately.
- Do not shake hands.
- Avoid touching your face and cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow.
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before and after any contact with surfaces that are used by more than one person.
- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched by more than one person – e.g. phones, door handles, benches, equipment.
- Avoid sharing implements e.g. cups or objects that you touch.

DOH may conduct compliance checks on adherence to the above principles.

People aged 70 and over, those with compromised immune systems and those with a chronic medical condition are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness, so their involvement should be considered on a case by case basis.

COVIDSafe App

Campaigners and scrutineers are encouraged to download the COVIDSafe App onto their devices.

Record keeping

Campaigners and Parties should maintain a register of their staff and volunteers, including their full names, a mobile phone number or email address and the location of their work. This record should be kept for 28 days thereafter to support contact tracing if required.

Campaigning

Social distancing and hygiene principles will have an impact on campaign activity at voting centres. Specifically, campaigners must maintain a distance of 1.5m between people and not shake hands.

Campaign activity means any of the following:

- canvassing for votes
- soliciting the vote of a person
- inducing a person not to vote for a particular candidate
- inducing a person not to vote at the election
- exhibiting a notice or sign relating to the election.

Campaigning at voting centres

Campaigners are required to comply with the guiding principles while conducting campaign activities at voting centres, including outside prohibition zones and alternate prohibition zones, and inside a designated campaign area (DCA).

Prohibition zones and alternate prohibition zones

The [Electoral Act 2004](#) establishes prohibition zones and alternate prohibition zones which exclude campaign activities within a certain distance of a voting centre. The prohibition zones will better allow electors to comply with social distancing requirements at voting centres.

Prohibition zones are set distances of 100 metres for an election day voting centre or 10 metres from the entrance of an early voting centre. Alternate prohibition zones can be established at election day voting centres at the discretion of the NTEC. For example, where a 100 metre prohibition zone boundary falls in the middle of a road the NTEC may create an alternate boundary, for instance on school grounds, the school perimeter fence may be the designated zone boundary.

The *Electoral Act 2004* states no person can engage in a campaign activity during voting hours:

- within 100 metres of an entrance to a voting centre on election day
- within an alternate prohibition zone at a voting centre on election day
- within 10 metres of an entrance to an early voting centre and remote voting centre.

Penalties apply for non-compliance.

A number of early voting centres will be located within shopping centres which do not permit campaigning. At these centres, there will be a table outside the voting centre where candidates can provide how-to-vote cards to the NTEC for display.

The NTEC will publish a map displaying the prohibition zone or alternate prohibition zone for each election day voting centre, these will be available on the website.

Designated campaign areas (DCA)

The NTEC may designate an area for campaigning within a prohibition zone or alternate prohibition zone at an election day voting centre. The DCA allows a maximum of three campaigners per candidate in a designated area. The DCA allows electors to enter a voting centre without being crowded by campaigners, yet provides them with the option to engage with campaigners at their discretion.

The NTEC will assess all election day voting centres and where possible, establish a DCA which is large enough to allow up to three campaigners for each candidate, can accommodate social distancing, and is accessible to voters yet can also be avoided by electors who do not wish to engage with campaigners.

Within a DCA, campaigners may:

- canvass for votes
- solicit the vote of a person
- hand out how-to-vote cards.

A campaigner in a DCA may wear political material; however, they cannot display other campaign material e.g. posters, corflute signs and marquees.

Where there is not a DCA, a table will be provided outside voting centres where candidates can provide the NTEC with how-to-vote cards to display.

The NTEC will publish a map displaying the location of the designated DCA for election day voting centres, where they are being applied. Written notice of the DCA will be provided to each candidate in the relevant division as soon as practicable after it is designated. Campaigners must be appointed by the candidate and register with the officer in charge (OIC) before entering a DCA using the [designated campaign area appointment form](#). Candidates are entitled to enter a DCA and may appoint themselves by completing an appointment form.

Scrutineering

The traditional method of scrutineering, which involves scrutineers being in close proximity to each other and NTEC staff, does not comply with current social distancing principles.

All NTEC staff and scrutineers are required to practice social distancing at voting centres and scrutiny centres. The requirement to maintain a distance of 1.5m from another person, or allow for four square metres per person, has resulted in a need to change how scrutineering is conducted.

Scrutineering during voting

Candidates are entitled to have a scrutineer present in voting centres. The NTEC will assess all voting centres and where social distancing requirements cannot be met, will attempt to source a larger venue.

Key change:

- If an alternative venue cannot be sourced and a smaller voting centre is used, there may be a maximum number of scrutineers allowed to enter the voting centre. Where this occurs, scrutineers may need to rotate entry into the voting centre. This should be discussed with the voting centre's OIC if required. The rotation of scrutineers in smaller voting centres will allow a sufficient number of NTEC staff and voters to occupy the centre at any one time to conduct voting.

Scrutineering on election night

The initial count of votes occurs on election night.

There are two types of scrutiny centres on election night:

- A scrutiny centre established at a voting centre
- Scrutiny headquarters, one in Darwin and Alice Springs, where the count of remote, postal and early votes occurs.

One scrutineer per candidate per count table is allowed inside a scrutiny centre.

Key change:

- No votes are to be challenged by scrutineers on election night. This is due to the crowded nature of scrutiny centres and the need to maintain social distancing which would limit a scrutineer's ability to have a clear and close view of ballot papers. Ballot papers may be challenged from the Monday following the election during the fresh count of all votes.

Scrutineering following election day

A fresh count of all votes begins on the Monday following the election at the two scrutiny centres in Darwin and Alice Springs. This is a full count of all votes received by the NTEC, including those already counted on election night.

One scrutineer per candidate per count table is allowed inside the scrutiny centres.

Votes can be challenged by scrutineers following election day. Fewer time constraints and a traditionally lower attendance at the vote count will allow for greater adherence to social distancing and a clearer view of ballot papers.