



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN

**First Nations  
Voice Election**



**Electoral  
Commission**  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



# Candidate handbook

[savoiceelection.sa.gov.au](https://savoiceelection.sa.gov.au)

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## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in putting your hand up to run as a candidate in South Australia's First Nations Voice to Parliament Election (SA First Nations Voice Election).

This handbook provides information about becoming a candidate in the SA First Nations Voice Election.

Although this handbook outlines key legislative requirements, for further information you should consult the South Australian legislation:

- the *First Nations Voice Act 2023* and the *Regulations* under that Act
- the *Electoral Act 1985* and the *Regulations* under that Act

These Acts and Regulations can be accessed from the South Australian Government Legislation website at [www.legislation.sa.gov.au](http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au)

While the Electoral Commission of South Australia (ECSA) may provide information, it cannot offer legal advice regarding the interpretation of the Acts and Regulations or the conduct of candidate election campaigns. You may consider seeking your own independent legal advice on any complex election matters.

The Electoral Commissioner is appointed as Returning Officer (RO) under the *First Nations Voice Act 2023* and is responsible for the management of the election of members for the Local First Nations Voice. The Electoral Commissioner appoints electoral officers to perform certain delegated electoral responsibilities. These electoral officers can provide information about election process and procedures and respond to any concerns or questions you may have about the content of this handbook.

**For more information visit:** [www.savoiceelection.sa.gov.au](http://www.savoiceelection.sa.gov.au) or [www.ecsa.sa.gov.au](http://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au)

### Contact details

**Address** Electoral Commission South Australia  
Level 6, 60 Light Square  
Adelaide South Australia 5000

**Phone** 1300 655 232 (within South Australia)  
(08) 7424 7400 (from interstate)  
+61 8 7424 7400 (from overseas)

**Email** [ecsa.nominations@sa.gov.au](mailto:ecsa.nominations@sa.gov.au)

## Definitions

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Candidate</b>            | A person who has put their hand up to represent their community and become a member of a Local First Nations Voice. To nominate, you must complete a nomination form and submit it to ECSA. The nomination must be accepted by ECSA for a person to become a candidate. |
| <b>Contested Election</b>   | A contested election occurs when there are more candidates than available positions. This is when eligible voters can then vote for who they would like to be elected.  |
| <b>Declaration</b>          | A formal statement.   |
| <b>Electoral Roll</b>       | The list of all people who are eligible to vote in South Australian state elections.  |
| <b>Eligibility</b>          | Criteria that determines who can and cannot do something.   |
| <b>Enrolled</b>             | On the list of people who are eligible to vote.   |
| <b>Formality</b>            | This means that the voter's choices are clearly marked on the ballot paper. In the SA First Nations Voice Election, the minimum requirement for a formal ballot paper is a clear indication of the voter's first choice.  |
| <b>Local Voice</b>          | An elected body of members that represent one of the six SA First Nations Voice regions.  |
| <b>Scrutineer</b>           | A person chosen by a candidate to be their representative and watch electoral processes to make sure they are done according to the law.  |
| <b>State Voice</b>          | A group consisting of two chosen members from each Local First Nations Voice.   |
| <b>Uncontested election</b> | This occurs when there are not more candidates than available positions. In an uncontested election, the candidate is elected without people needing to vote.   |
| <b>Vote</b>                 | People choosing who they would like to be elected. Votes are cast on a ballot paper.  |

## Timetable

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Nominations open</b>           | Tuesday, 27 January 2026  |
| <b>Nominations close</b>          | 5pm Tuesday, 10 February 2026   |
| <b>Declaration of nominations</b> | Tuesday, 24 February 2026   |
| <b>Roll close</b>                 | Friday, 27 February 2026  |
| <b>Remote mobile polling</b>      | Tuesday, 10 February 2026 to Friday, 20 March 2026  |
| <b>Early voting period</b>        | Saturday, 14 March 2026 to Friday, 20 March 2026  |
| <b>Polling day</b>                | <b>Saturday, 21 March 2026</b>  |
| <b>Scrutiny and count</b>         | From Monday, 30 March 2026  |
| <b>Provisional declaration</b>    | When each count has finished  |
| <b>Declaration of elections</b>   | Contested elections – 48 hours after the provisional declaration<br>Uncontested elections – Tuesday, 24 February 2026 |

### Nominations open

The date a person can submit a nomination form and supporting documents to ECSA.

### Nominations close

The last date and time a person can submit a nomination form and supporting documents to ECSA. No changes or new nominations can be made after this date.

### Roll close

This is the date when all applications (including updated information) for the electoral roll are considered to be final for the purpose of this election.

### Declaration of nominations

This is the date when ECSA formally announces the candidates who have been accepted for this election.

- If there are less accepted candidates than available positions, the accepted candidates are elected (Uncontested election).
- If there are more accepted candidates than available positions, ECSA conducts a draw to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot paper (Contested election).

### **Early voting period**

This is the period when voters can visit an early voting centre to cast a vote before polling day.

### **Polling day**

This is the day when most voters will visit a polling booth to cast their vote. Polling day for the SA First Nations Voice election is the same day as the State election.

### **Scrutiny and count**

During these days, the votes that were cast at the election will be counted.

### **Provisional declaration**

After the scrutiny and count of votes is completed, ECSA will announce the successful candidates. At this time, results are provisional (not finalised).

### **Declaration of elections**

The final declaration of results will occur after the 48-hour period for unsuccessful candidates to request a recount of the votes has concluded.



# SOUTH AUSTRALIAN First Nations Voice to Parliament

## About the SA First Nations Voice Election

### What is the SA First Nations Voice?

In 2023, the South Australian (SA) First Nations Voice to Parliament was established.

The SA First Nations Voice is made up of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who have been elected to represent their communities and provide advice on laws, policies, and programs through direct communication with key decision-makers.

The purpose of the SA First Nations Voice is to enable more informed and inclusive decision-making about the issues that matter most to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities. To achieve this purpose, the SA First Nations Voice is composed of two levels:

- **The Local First Nations Voice** – an elected body of members that represent each of the six regions.
- **The State First Nation Voice** – a group consisting of two chosen members from each Local First Nations Voice.

### What is the SA First Nations Voice Election?

The SA First Nations Voice Election is the process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of South Australia to elect candidates to represent their community. The elected members can provide advice on laws, policies and programs through direct communication with the decision-makers.

The first ever SA First Nations Voice Election was held on Saturday, 16 March 2024. This is when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people voted for the candidates that they wanted to be elected to their Local First Nations Voice.

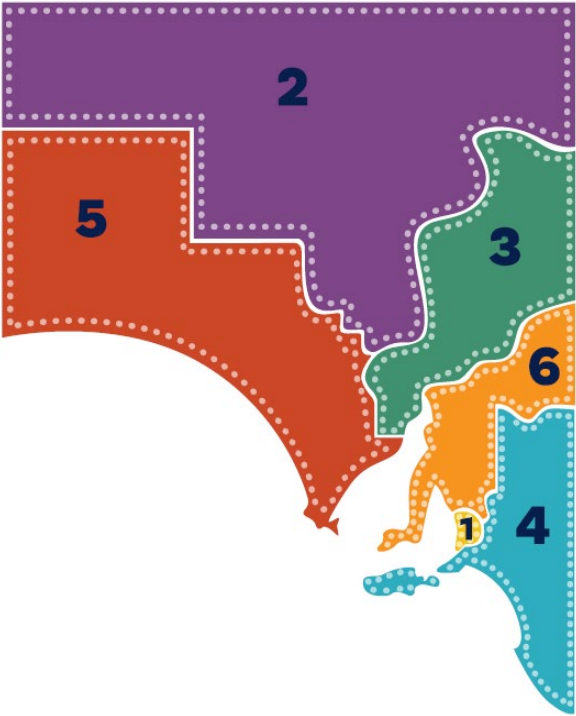
The next SA First Nations Voice Election will happen at the same time as the 2026 State Election. This means that voters can go to any polling booth around the state to vote in both elections.

Local First Nations Voice

For the purpose of SA First Nations Voice Election, South Australia is divided into six regions. Each region elects representatives to form their own Local First Nations Voice.

Candidates nominate to represent one of the six Local First Nations Voices.

- Region 1 - Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi (Central)
- Region 2 - Far North
- Region 3 - Flinders and Upper North
- Region 4 - Murraylands, Riverland and South East
- Region 5 - West and West Coast
- Region 6 - Yorke and Mid North



Each Local First Nations Voice is made of a set number of elected members and has positions reserved for males only, females only, plus one position for a person of any gender (male, female, or any other gender).

The structure of each region’s Local First Nations Voice is recorded in the table below.

| Region  | Male Positions | Female Positions | Any Gender | Total Members |
|---|----------------|------------------|------------|---------------|
| Region 1 - Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi (Central) | 5              | 5                | 1          | 11            |
| Region 2 - Far North                              | 3              | 3                | 1          | 7             |
| Region 3 - Flinders and Upper North               | 3              | 3                | 1          | 7             |
| Region 4 - Murraylands, Riverland and South East  | 3              | 3                | 1          | 7             |
| Region 5 - West and West Coast                    | 3              | 3                | 1          | 7             |
| Region 6 - Yorke and Mid North                    | 3              | 3                | 1          | 7             |

Please refer to the Voice Secretariat for information regarding the Local First Nations Voice roles and responsibilities. For more information visit [www.firstnationsvoice.sa.gov.au](http://www.firstnationsvoice.sa.gov.au).



# Nominating

## Who can nominate?

To be a candidate in the SA First Nations Voice Election, you must:

- **Be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person;** and
- **Be 18 years or older;** and
- **Be enrolled** on the South Australian electoral roll; and
- **Live in the region** you are nominating for (as recorded on the South Australian electoral roll) **OR**  
**Be a traditional owner** in relation to an area located wholly or partly within the region you are nominating for.

You may only nominate for one region.

## Who cannot nominate?

You cannot be a candidate if:

- You are currently in jail or remanded in custody in relation to a charge of an offence; or
- You have been found guilty of a serious criminal offence within the last two years; or
- You are restricted from travelling within the state because of a bail, parole or other agreement; or
- You have been disqualified from managing corporations under the *Corporations Act 2001*.

## When can I nominate?

The nomination period opens: **Tuesday, 27 January 2026**

The nomination period closes: **5pm Tuesday, 10 February 2026**

All documents must be received by ECSA before the close of nominations at 5pm Tuesday, 10 February 2026.

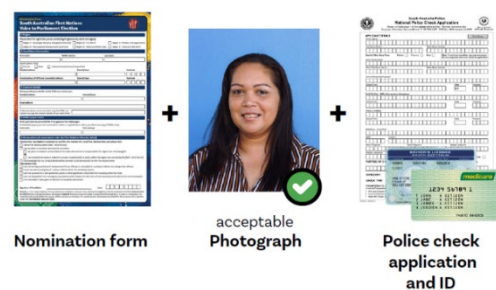
## What do I have to do to nominate?

To nominate, you must:

1. Complete a nomination form and sign the declaration.
2. Provide a photograph of your head and shoulders.
3. Provide a criminal history report (such as a police check) that is less than 6 months old **OR**

Apply for a police check and supply the required identity documents.

**There is no cost to apply for a police check as part of your nomination.**



## What happens after I submit my nomination?

- **Nominations are processed:** After 5pm on Tuesday, 10 February 2026, all received nominations will be processed, and police checks will be conducted by SAPOL.
- **Candidate names are confidential:** ECSA does not share the names of intending candidates until the declaration of nominations. However, if you want to begin your campaign prior to the declaration of nominations, you may do so.
- **Declaration of nominations:** At 12 noon on Tuesday, 23 February 2026, ECSA will publicly share the names of candidates that have had their nominations accepted. Accepted candidates will be notified about the declaration of nominations and provided with a link to view the event.
- **Draw for positions on the ballot paper:** If there are more candidates than the number of positions available, an election must be held. ECSA must conduct a draw to determine the order that candidates are to appear on the ballot paper. The draw for positions on the ballot paper occurs at the declaration of nominations and you may attend in-person, or view online via the provided link.

## Can I withdraw my nomination?

If you have submitted a nomination and change your mind, you can withdraw your nomination before the declaration of nominations.

Nominations can be withdrawn by notifying ECSA via email at [ecsa.nominations@sa.gov.au](mailto:ecsa.nominations@sa.gov.au). ECSA must be notified of the withdrawal of a nomination **before** the declaration of nominations.

**You are not able to withdraw your nomination after this time.**

## Candidate support

You are encouraged to attend an engagement session with ECSA. ECSA will discuss:

- How the election is conducted
- The election timetable
- Nomination procedures
- Scrutineers
- Voting procedures and process.

There are face-to-face engagement sessions and online sessions being offered by ECSA.

For more information about sessions visit [savoicerelection.sa.gov.au](http://savoicerelection.sa.gov.au)

## **Campaigning**

If there are less accepted candidates than positions, an election will not be needed. These accepted candidates will be declared elected, and an election campaign will not be necessary.

However, if there are more accepted candidates than positions, an election will be required. You may consider campaigning to make your community aware that you are a candidate. As voting is voluntary, people need to know about you and what you stand for. A campaign can encourage people to vote for you.

ECSA cannot provide advice on how to run an election campaign. Candidates may conduct their own research on campaigning.

Polling day is Saturday, 21 March 2026. However, many people choose to vote early (at early voting centres, mobile polling booths, or by post) so consider starting your campaign with enough time to reach these people.

### **When planning your campaign, you may wish to consider:**

- What qualities you have to be an effective community leader
- What community issues are important to you
- What you stand for
- How you can best represent the whole community
- What your messaging will be
- How much time and money you can spend
- If you have people who can help you with your campaign

### **You may also wish to consider:**

- Deadlines and details for local media
- Advertising costs
- Designers or printers who can help with promotional material
- Website support for your online activity
- Advertising a 'meet the candidate' event in your community

### **Some ways to promote yourself to voters include:**

- Calling voters on the phone
- Putting a pamphlet in letterboxes
- Writing letters to voters
- Door knocking
- Speaking to local clubs and community groups
- Talking to people in your community
- Interviews with local newspapers, radio, or TV
- Paid advertisements in local media or online
- Placing posters in local shop windows or on noticeboards (with permission)
- Speaking at public meetings
- Holding events where you can promote your community's priorities
- Creating a website
- Building a social media presence
- Sending emails (with permission)

**Note:** ECSA does not provide information about voters to candidates, including phone numbers or addresses.

## Electoral Material

As a candidate, you may publish electoral material as part of your campaign. Electoral material means an advertisement, notice, statement or representation intended to affect the result of an election.

Electoral material must not be published unless the material contains the name and address of the person who authorises publication of the material. Candidates may authorise their own electoral material, or someone else may authorise it for them.

If you are a candidate and authorise your own material, you may include the region you are nominating for instead of your address. The table below includes some examples of how to authorise your electoral material.

If you are using the Internet to publish your electoral material, you can include the authorisation on the relevant website in a place that is immediately accessible to someone looking at the page. For example, if using a social media platform, the name and address of the person who authorises the electoral material can be displayed in the 'about' or 'bio' section of the account or profile page.

If you do not comply with this rule, the returning officer may require you to update your electoral material to comply with this rule, take the information down, or re-issue corrected material.

| Publication Type   | Example of correct authorisation   |
|--|--|
| <b>A flyer or other printed material</b>                             | <b>If authorised by a candidate:</b><br><br>"Authorised by John Citizen, Candidate for election to the Local First Nations Voice for Region 1"<br><br><b>If authorised by someone other than a candidate:</b><br><br>"Authorised by Adam Smith, 1 Election St, Adelaide" |
| <b>A social media page</b><br>(in the about section of your profile) | "John Citizen, Candidate for election to the Local First Nations Voice for Region 1"   |

# Voting

## Who can vote?

Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enrolled on the South Australian electoral roll can vote in the election. You can check if you are on the roll, update your details, and apply to be included on the roll at [savoicerelection.sa.gov.au](https://savoicerelection.sa.gov.au)

To vote, you must sign a declaration confirming that you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

You can only vote for the region in which you are enrolled.

## How do I vote?

There are several ways to vote during this election, including:

- On polling day
- At an early voting centre
- At a mobile polling booth
- By post

### Polling day will be Saturday, 21 March 2026.

There will be polling booths located across the state where eligible electors can vote in person for both the 2026 State Election and SA First Nations Voice Election. Locations will be promoted closer to polling day.

If you cannot attend a polling booth on polling day, there are other options to ensure you can vote.

### Early voting

Early voting centres will be open from Saturday, 14 March to Friday, 20 March 2026. Eligible electors who cannot attend a polling booth on election day may vote at an early voting centre. Locations will be promoted closer to the election.

### Postal voting

You can apply to have your ballot paper sent to you by post.

Postal vote applications will be available on [savoicerelection.sa.gov.au](https://savoicerelection.sa.gov.au)

**Note:** Postal voting packs will not arrive until after Tuesday, 3 March 2026.

**Note 2:** If you wish to also receive your State Election ballot papers by post, then you will need to complete an additional postal vote application (additional eligibility criteria apply).

### Mobile polling

Mobile polling will be conducted in regional and remote locations between Tuesday, 10 March and Friday, 20 March 2026. Mobile polling locations and times will be advised closer to the election.

**Other ways that people can vote (eligibility criteria apply)**

ECSA sends electoral visitor teams to certain declared institutions (hospitals, aged-care facilities, prisons) to provide an opportunity for residents to vote.

Voters who are blind/low vision or who have a motor impairment that prevents them from attending a polling place may be eligible to use the telephone assisted voting service. More information will be available at [savoicerelection.sa.gov.au](https://savoicerelection.sa.gov.au)

**Scrutineers**

You can appoint scrutineers to observe electoral processes on your behalf. Scrutineers may be present at any polling, scrutiny or counting location if they are appointed by a candidate contesting the election. A maximum of two scrutineers per candidate may be present at a location at any given time.

## Counting

### What happens after voting closes?

After the close of polling at 6pm on Saturday, 21 March 2026, all votes are transported from across the state and securely returned to ECSA's Central Processing Centre (CPC) in Adelaide.

During this period, the declaration envelopes (that the ballot papers were sealed in) are reviewed by ECSA staff to ensure that they are signed and that no one has voted more than once. The envelopes are sorted into their correct region ready for the count. The envelopes are not opened, and the ballot papers are not removed from the envelopes before the count starts on Monday, 30 March 2026. This process can be observed by appointed scrutineers.

Postal votes will continue to be returned to ECSA until Saturday, 28 March 2026.

Following this, counting can start on Monday, 30 March 2025.

### Where will the count be, and when will it start?

The count will be held at ECSA's Central Processing Centre (CPC) in Adelaide. Counting of votes starts on Monday, 30 March 2026. Each region will be counted separately. After voting has closed, a schedule of all the counts will be provided to candidates. It is difficult to predict the time required for each count. Depending on the number of votes, the count for each region could take a few hours or days to complete. It may take several weeks for all counts to be completed.

### Who runs the count?

The count is run by ECSA, the independent government agency that runs the whole election. The Count Manager oversees the counting location and directs the staff employed and trained by ECSA to do the count. Other ECSA supervisors may be in the room to help the Count Manager during the counting process.

### Can a candidate watch the count?

Candidates cannot watch the count in person; however, they can choose someone to watch it for them. This person is called a scrutineer. The scrutineer's job is to watch the process and ensure the counting staff follow the correct procedure.

The scrutineer can ask the Count Manager questions about the process and pass information on to the candidate.

A scrutineer must bring an appointment form signed by the candidate confirming that they have been appointed as a scrutineer by the candidate.

Each candidate may appoint one or more scrutineers; however, a maximum of two scrutineers may represent a candidate at the counting centre at any given time.

Candidates will receive more information about scrutineering via direct communications and the ECSA website.

## What happens when counting starts?

A **proportional representation** counting system (known as single-transferrable vote) is used. It is assessed as a 'fair' system for counting votes but can be more complex than other counting systems, and it may take longer to complete. More information on this counting system can be found in the appendix, but a brief overview of the process is included below.

When the count starts, ECSA will:

- Remove the declaration flaps from all the envelopes that contain the ballot papers (this is so every vote is secret).
- Open all the accepted envelopes and remove the ballot papers.
- Check the ballot papers for formality.
  - If the ballot paper has a clear first preference, it is called formal and can be included in the count.
  - If the ballot paper is blank or has no clear first preference, it is called informal and cannot be included in the count.
- The formal ballot papers are sorted into piles based on what the voter has marked on their paper.
- Ballot papers continue to be distributed (according to the preferences marked on each ballot paper) until all vacancies have been filled and candidates are **provisionally elected**.

## What happens after the count?

After the count has finished, ECSA will provisionally declare the elected candidates. This means that results are not yet final, as there is a 48-hour period that unsuccessful candidates can request a recount.

Recount requests must be made by email (to [ecsa.nominations@sa.gov.au](mailto:ecsa.nominations@sa.gov.au)) and must explain how the result would change from a recount (for example, providing evidence that process was not followed correctly).

## How will I know the results?

As soon as the count is finished, ECSA attempts to phone each candidate to inform them of the provisional results. ECSA also publishes the provisional results as soon as possible on the website.

If no recounts are granted within the 48-hour period, the results become finalised. ECSA sends the final results to all candidates by email (or letter if no email address has been provided).



## Complaints

ECSA's Feedback and Complaints Policy establishes the standards which the Electoral Commissioner requires for complaints to be considered, as well as the standards which individuals and organisations may expect to receive in their dealings with ECSA.

Complaints must be made in writing and can be submitted by the following methods:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Online</b>   | <a href="https://ecsa.sa.gov.au/about-ecsa/feedback-and-complaints">ecsa.sa.gov.au/about-ecsa/feedback-and-complaints</a> |
| <b>By email</b> | <a href="mailto:ecsa.complaints@sa.gov.au">ecsa.complaints@sa.gov.au</a>  |
| <b>By post</b>  | Electoral Commissioner<br>Electoral Commission SA<br>GPO Box 646<br>ADELAIDE SA 5001                                      |

The Electoral Commissioner will consider all formal complaints on merit and the legislative provisions or rules which are relevant to the complaint.

Any personal information provided in the course of managing feedback or complaints will be managed in accordance with relevant legal and policy requirements.

ECSA treats complaints and feedback confidentially; however, in some circumstances may be required to disclose information to resolve the complaint or feedback.

Where the parties involved have publicised the matter, the Electoral Commissioner may confirm the existence of a complaint but will not discuss the details.

ECSA may make public comment regarding feedback and complaints in order to ensure electors are aware of a situation and/or have accurate information.

ECSA will acknowledge all feedback and complaints where contact information is provided within 2 business days.

ECSA will strive to resolve complaints within 5 days of acknowledgement.

If, given the complexity of a complaint, it cannot be resolved within 5 business days, ECSA will advise of the time frame expected and keep the complainant up to date throughout the process.

# Appendix

## What is proportional representation?

The method of electing candidates for this election is called proportional representation.

Under this system, to be elected, a candidate is typically required to obtain a ‘quota’ of the formal votes.

The quota is the number of votes required to be elected, and it is determined by the following mathematical formula:

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{(\text{Number of formal ballot papers})}{(\text{Number of vacancies } + 1)} + 1$$

## How many positions are available?

Additionally, in the SA First Nations Voice Election, the number of elected members must satisfy legislated gender representation requirements. This means that each region has a set number of positions reserved for males, females, and a final position that can be filled by a person of any gender.

- In Region 1, there are 11 positions available: Five positions reserved for males, five positions reserved for females, and one position for a person of any gender.
- In all other regions, there are 7 positions available: Three positions reserved for males, three positions reserved for females, and one position for a person of any gender.

## What happens during a count?

### First Preference Distribution

During a scrutiny and count, the formal votes are sorted into piles based on the preferences marked on the ballot papers. For example, all the ballot papers that marked Candidate A as their first choice are sorted into a pile, the ballot papers that marked Candidate B as their first choice are sorted into a separate pile, and so on.

The number of votes each candidate received is then counted to see if any candidate has obtained the quota. If a candidate has obtained quota (and a position is still available in accordance with the gender representation requirements) then they are **provisionally elected**.

### Surplus Transfers

If a candidate has received more votes than the quota, these extra votes are called a **surplus**. The surplus must be transferred to the next preference marked on each ballot paper. Because it is not possible to determine which votes actually elected the candidate and which votes are surplus, all the elected candidate’s ballot papers are distributed at a reduced value called a ‘transfer value’.

$$\text{Transfer value} = \frac{\text{Candidate’s number of surplus votes}}{\text{Candidate’s total number of ballot papers}}$$

### Exclusions

If no candidate has achieved the quota after a distribution has been fully completed, then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is **excluded**. This means that the excluded candidate is removed from the count and cannot receive any further votes. All votes that had already been received by the excluded candidate need to be transferred to candidates remaining in the count. Ballot papers are transferred according to the next available preference marked on each ballot paper (and are transferred at the same value at which they were received).

### **Eliminations**

If all the positions available for a particular gender have been filled, then the candidates of that gender remaining in the count can no longer be elected. This is called an **elimination**. The votes already received by eliminated candidates must then be distributed to candidates remaining in the count, according to the preferences marked on each ballot paper.

### **Exhausted ballot papers**

During a distribution of ballot papers (resulting from a surplus transfer, exclusion, or elimination) an individual ballot paper may not express any further preferences for candidates that are remaining in the count. In this instance, the ballot paper is called **exhausted** and set aside, as it is unable to be transferred any further.

