

*Information Package
for Returning +
Assistant Returning
Officer Applicants*

Background

The Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) is expanding its pool of Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs).

These positions make up the two-person management team for each individual election and are based at offsite Election Offices (EOs). Multiple elections and their management teams can be located within the one election office site. Additional support staff are employed to assist with processes at election offices.

Multiple positions will be available in Launceston and Hobart during 2021 & 2022. North-West candidates, who are comfortable with daily travel to Launceston or have capacity to self-relocate to Launceston or Hobart during the election period, are welcome to apply.

This information pack relates to Parliamentary election positions which cover the four yearly statewide House of Assembly and annual Legislative Council elections.

Management of Legislative Council elections usually spans from late March until late May each year.

- 2021 has 3 Legislative Council elections – 2 based in Launceston and 1 in Hobart
- 2022 has 2 Legislative Council elections – 1 based in Launceston and 1 in Hobart

Management of **House of Assembly** elections is not set to fixed dates but usually spans across 9-10 weeks.

- The next House of Assembly elections must be held no later than mid 2022 and will see 2 based in Launceston and 3 based in Hobart.

A small amount of intrastate travel and overnight stays may be required in the lead up to and during an election.

There is additional information available on our website, and you are encouraged to explore this in preparation for your application.

Reflections from a previous Returning Officer:

"This has been a really steep learning curve for me. It has been a very busy time but an exciting and rewarding one as well.

Interestingly, I had, in a way, been dreading polling weekend, thinking everything was going to be done under great pressure while having to follow processes of which I wasn't 100% sure.

In the end, polling weekend was great! I really enjoyed it. There was the satisfaction of everything going well, of course, but the best thing was the wonderful staff who came in to work. Most were very experienced and they did their tasks in a thoroughly professional manner but it was fun! They were lovely people and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting them and their company. We even had time for a laugh – at appropriate times. At the end of the election there was a wonderful feeling of a job well done.

I enjoyed the training sessions, too. I was a little apprehensive before the first one but then looked forward to the others. Why? Lovely to meet new people and know we were all working together to do something special."

"It was a tremendously satisfying thing to achieve and contribute to our community."

Support

Prior to and during the election, Election Office management teams are actively supported, guided and mentored by staff at the TEC.

Training

The TEC will provide ROs and AROs with on-line and face-to-face training, before and during the appointment. Where possible, training will occur in the month prior to commencement of the election period.

The face-to-face training will be held in Hobart and the TEC will provide you with transport and accommodation for your attendance. The on-line component will require access to a personal computer with an internet connection.

Remuneration

Under the *Electoral Act 2004*, remuneration is determined annually by the TEC and is usually reflective of state service pay rates.

The current (gross) package rates (September 2020) are:

Legislative Council (single member election)

Uncontested election -

For an estimated combined total work attendance of 3 weeks:

RO - \$5,400

ARO - \$4,000

Contested election -

For an estimated 8 week period:

RO - \$17,400

ARO - \$12,900

House of Assembly (multiple member election)

For an estimated 9-10 week period:

RO - \$22,300

ARO - \$16,600

The package (plus superannuation) is paid in increments each fortnight during the period of employment.

What is a Returning Officer (RO)?

Under the *Electoral Act 2004*, the Returning Officer is a statutory position responsible for the conduct of a ballot (election).

A separate election is held for each Parliamentary division - meaning 5 elections are held for the House of Assembly (State), and two or three elections are due to be held each year as part of the Legislative Council election cycle. A Returning Officer and Assistant is appointed to each division.

Core Responsibilities:

- Responsible for the election Writ
- Receiving and accepting nominations
- Managing candidate, party and public queries
- Training of polling officials
- Oversight of the return and processing of postal votes
- Oversight of dispatch and return of materials and equipment to polling places
- Oversight of mobile, pre-poll, postal and polling day election staff
- Accountable for daily balances and sign off of processes
- Responsive management of polling day issues
- Managing post close of poll procedures
- Conduct large scrutiny processes
- Conduct formal public ceremonies

Attributes:

- Capacity to quickly gain a knowledge and understanding of new processes and willingness to follow strict procedures whilst operating within tight timeframes.
- "Hands-on" project management skills in an operations or logistics environment.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills including the proven ability to motivate, consult, negotiate, resolve conflict and work with a broad range of people.
- Capacity to develop a team-based positive work environment, through delegation, supervision, motivation and training of staff.
- Ability to operate calmly, courteously and with focused priorities when under significant pressure.
- A good knowledge of and appropriate experience with the internet and computer software products such as Outlook, Word and Excel.

Mandatory Requirements

- The position requires strict political neutrality
- Significant extra hours are required, especially during peak election periods
- A current driver's licence

What is an Assistant Returning Officer (ARO)?

The Assistant Returning Officer supports the Returning Officer during an election period through management of key administration duties. In an emergency, may be required to undertake the role of Returning Officer.

Core Responsibilities:

- Handle public enquiries and escalate where necessary
- Assist in the preparation, set-up and presentation of polling manager training
- Oversee casual staff within the Election Office environment
- Receive nominations in the absence of the Returning Officer
- Assist in the management and processing of returned postal votes
- Assist in the dispatch and return of materials and equipment
- Attend to pre-poll voting in the Election Office environment
- Assist in the management of staff involved in mobile and pre-poll voting
- Reconcile and provide daily pre-poll and postal vote figures to the Returning Officer
- Manage polling place staff changes and absences at short notice
- Manage the return and security of polling place materials at close of polling
- Assist in the management of post close of poll procedures
- Manage the completeness and submission of polling place staff time-sheets to the TEC
- Assist in scrutiny processes
- Liaise with TEC contacts regarding staffing / materials / hire vehicles etc arrangements
- Attend to administrative requirements as instructed by the Returning Officer and TEC staff

Attributes:

- Capacity to quickly gain a knowledge and understanding of new processes and willingness to follow strict procedures whilst operating within tight time-frames
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills including the proven ability to work with a broad range of people
- Contribute effectively within a team-based positive work environment
- Strong ability to multi-task with a focus on accuracy whilst operating calmly, courteously and with focused priorities when under pressure.
- A good knowledge of and appropriate experience with the internet and computer software products such as Outlook, Word and Excel.

Mandatory Requirements

- The position requires strict political neutrality
- Significant extra hours are required, especially during peak election periods
- A current driver's licence

Information Sessions (optional)

It is recommended you consider attending one of the information sessions where more information will be provided about the roles. The sessions will include first-hand insight from a current RO and will allow time for questions about the roles.

Sessions will be held as follows;

Monday 19th October	6pm – 7pm	Tailrace Centre, 1 Waterfront Drive, Riverside
Tuesday 20th October	6pm – 7pm	TEC Office, Level 3, 169 Main Rd, Moonah

RSVP via email to employment@tec.tas.gov.au by CoB Thursday 15th October is essential.

How to Apply?

We ask that you reflect on the duties and attributes required for each of the positions and determine where your skillset best sits. Once determined, please provide:

- An indication of the primary position you wish to apply for (RO or ARO)
- An indication if you would also like to be considered for the alternate position
- Examples of where you have shown the following attributes (maximum of 3 pages):
 1. (RO) "Hands-on" project management skills in an operations or logistics environment.
(ARO) Ability to coordinate logistics and manage a dynamic workload
 2. (RO) Capacity to develop a team-based positive work environment, through delegation, supervision, motivation and training of staff.
(ARO) Capacity to contribute to a positive team-based work environment, leading and supporting casual staff
 3. Capacity to quickly gain a knowledge and understanding of new processes and willingness to follow strict procedures whilst operating within tight timeframes.
 4. Strong communication and interpersonal skills including the proven ability to work with a broad range of people.
 5. Ability to multi-task with a focus on accuracy whilst operating calmly, courteously and with focused priorities when under pressure.
 6. A good knowledge of and appropriate experience with the internet and computer software products such as Outlook, Word and Excel.
- Your resume
- Contact details of two people who can speak to your skills and attributes
- Confirmation of the Mandatory Requirements outlined on the previous page.

Forward your application to: employment@tec.tas.gov.au

Questions? employment@tec.tas.gov.au or 6208 8700

Applications close CoB Monday 26th October 2020

Assessment + Interview Processes

Following assessment of applications, the TEC will invite suitably skilled, shortlisted applicants for a 2-3 hour interview process.

The process will involve 3 elements:

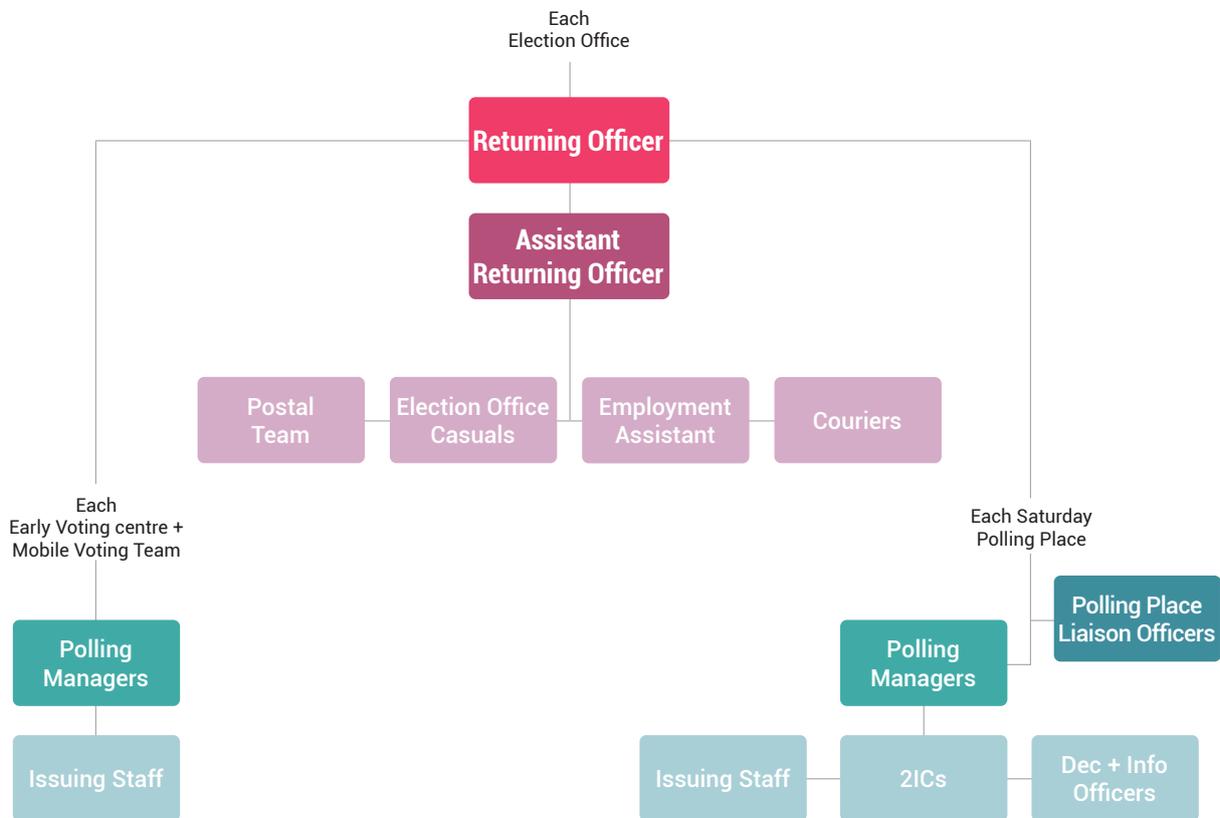
- Panel interview
- Computers skills assessment
- Scenario preparation and response assessment

Separate group interview days will be held for each of the positions. Those indicating a preference to be considered for both roles will be interviewed based on their primary choice.

Interviews will be conducted at the TEC's Moonah offices. Shortlisted candidates from the North and North-West will be provided with the option of group travel in a TEC vehicle.

Election Office Staffing Structure

An election office is created for each division going to election.



The following is designed to give you a little insight into the RO role -

A snapshot of the Returning Officer role across a Legislative Council election.

As the manager of a Parliamentary election the Returning Officer (RO) is responsible for a number of legislated electoral processes. The following is a simple summary of the stages of a Tasmanian Parliamentary election and the key activities that the RO is responsible to undertake or manage.

Election Preparation - part of Week 1

The RO and Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) commence work and set up the election office in the days prior to the issue of the writ. You may have some training to undertake during this period.

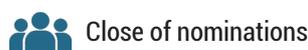
Receiving the Writ and the nomination period - Weeks 2 + 3



The election commences once the RO formally receives the signed Writ from the Governor. The roll for the election is closed at 6pm on the day the Writ is received. The nomination period commences on the next business day. The conclusion of the nomination period is advised in the Writ.



Nominations can be received during the nomination period (during weeks 2 and 3). Both the RO and the Electoral Commissioner can **accept** nominations. The ARO can **receive** nominations on behalf of the RO and be responsible for banking of monies and assisting the RO to check and provide official documentation on the nominations. The RO is responsible for providing information to candidates, entering nominations into the nominations database, proofing the data and sending out of letters.



The close of the nomination period is at 12 noon on the date set in the Writ. This is usually late in week 3. No nomination can be received after the close of nominations.



Announcement of nominations

Twenty-four hours after the close of nominations, the RO announces the accepted nominations and conducts a draw for the order of candidate names on the first ballot paper rotation. Tasmanian parliamentary and local government elections use Robson Rotation of candidate names on ballot papers.



Candidate, media and party liaison

Throughout the election period the RO will be contacted by candidates, parties, media and the public about election issues. Some issues can be addressed by the RO, while some will need to be escalated to the TEC and the Electoral Commissioner.



Staffing in an RO Office

From set up of the election office to Announcement of Nominations the office will be staffed by the RO and the ARO. An additional casual may be required following the announcement of nominations to assist with preparations for early voting. During Week 3 the RO and ARO will finalise the additional staff required for undertaking processes during the early voting period. Furthermore, the RO will need to facilitate some basic pre-poll training of election casuals prior to the early voting period.

Early voting period - Weeks 4 to 6

While Tasmanian Parliamentary elections have polling day as the peak of the election, a key stage of compulsory voting elections is the provision of alternative/early voting services for electors who are unable to attend a polling place on polling day.

The next stage of Parliamentary elections is a two / three week period where different forms of early voting are available and preparations for polling day are undertaken.



Early Voting services: Pre-Poll voting

Pre-poll voting centres are usually provided in or near the election office during the whole early voting period. Additional pre-poll centres located in other areas within or near the division may also be opened during the early voting period. Pre-poll voting generally increases closer to polling day, usually requiring additional staff in the final days/week. In some of the geographically larger divisions, remote pre-poll centres will be open for the last two days of the early voting period.

The RO is responsible for all pre-poll centres allocated to him/her. Each pre-poll centre will have a pre-poll team.



Early Voting services: Postal voting

Postal voting is also an early voting service provided. The TEC will be responsible for receiving postal vote applications and issuing all postal vote packs. The completed postal votes will be mailed directly to the election office. The RO is responsible for processing received postal votes, including monitoring and daily balancing.

The ARO will have hands on responsibility for managing issues and escalating, when appropriate to the RO. The postal process usually has a postal vote supervisor and processing staff. Staff numbers will increase closer to polling day. Pre-poll and Postal staff within the election office also provide coverage across each process.



Early Voting services: Mobile polling

Mobile polling teams are election officials who provide on-site voting services in Commissioner appointed premises such as hospitals and nursing homes. Mobile polling usually occurs in the second half of the early voting period.

Early Voting services: Blind and Vision-Impaired voting

The TEC has a computer based voting system to enable blind and vision-impaired electors to independently complete a vote. This system is made available in an assigned pre-poll centre and polling place on polling day. The RO has responsibility for Vi-Vote (Vision Impaired Voting) in their division, including training users.

Polling day preparation: Polling premises and staffing

The major logistical elements of polling day are the hire of premises and the recruitment of polling place staff. The TEC undertake these duties on behalf of the RO. The RO will be provided with all premises and staffing details for his/her division.

ROs need to familiarise themselves with polling places via pictures of premises and Google maps to ensure they have an understanding of distances between premises, quality of roads and the possible impact on material delivery and return and emergency issues that may arise on polling day. ROs will also investigate any events happening in their division to ensure adequate staffing and materials have been provided, for example if a major cultural event was scheduled the same day as polling in a town this could have an impact on voter turnout and additional resources may be required on polling day.

The RO and ARO are required to manage any staffing or premise issues that arise.



Polling day preparation: Staff Training

The RO is responsible for managing the provision of training to the following electoral officials:

- Postal voting staff (within the election office)
- Pre-poll voting staff
- Mobile polling staff
- Polling Managers (PM), the Second in Charge (2IC) of a polling place and Polling Place Liaison Officers (PPLO) – who support a group of PMs.

Postal, pre-poll and mobile training is provided directly by the RO in the election office. Separate training sessions are provided for PPLOs, PMs and 2ICs. These training sessions last for three hours and will be jointly conducted by a trainer (educationalist), either the RO or ARO and a support casual, creating a team of 3 people for each training session.

Training for polling weekend staff will occur over the last two weeks of the early voting period. These are predominantly evening or weekend sessions. In divisions with a large geographical area, this may require overnight travel.



Polling day preparation: Delivery of material and equipment and hire cars

All resources used in a polling place are classified as either election equipment or election material. Election equipment is the physical structures needed for conducting polling, such as ballot boxes, voting screens and additional chairs and tables. Election material is all of the smaller elements required for voting, including netbooks, ballot papers, pencils, signs, lanyards and documentation.

Election equipment is usually delivered directly to the polling premise while election material is usually given to the PM at the training session. While the TEC will organise delivery and return schedules for the election equipment to the division, the RO is responsible for co-ordinating premises delivery with local couriers.

The RO will be responsible for monitoring events in their division which may have an impact on their delivery and return of materials, for example Targa, a major sporting event etc.

Hire cars will be made available for some roles, such as mobile polling staff, some PPLOs, materials delivery and collection from polling places and for the RO to enable transport to off-site training sessions and for activities over polling weekend.



Polling day preparation: final preparations for polling weekend

In the final days of the early voting period, the RO also finalises staffing and site preparations for the polling weekend procedures. There are also a number of final procedures for the early voting period, such as closing and return of material from mobile polling and pre-poll voting centres.



Polling day and after the close of the poll: Week 7 – part of week 8

The busiest time of the election is polling weekend. The RO and ARO will be overseeing many parallel processes and are to ensure these processes are appropriately resourced and conducted in accordance with the legislated or TEC approved process in a consistent, accurate and transparent manner.



Polling Saturday

During the polling period, the RO and ARO monitor and manage any issues that arise in polling places, they keep the TEC across any critical issues or mishaps and ensure voting is being conducted smoothly across the division.

Once the poll closes the election office undertakes a range of processes including:

- Counting pre-poll, mobile and already returned postal votes
- Monitoring the transmission of polling place vote totals, and
- Receiving and processing the return of election material from all polling places



Polling Sunday

The Sunday after polling usually consists of:

- Further processing of returned election material, including preparing for the exchange of out of division votes, and
- Commencing the process of rechecking the ballot papers allocated at the polling places.

For a Legislative Council election, a provisional distribution of preferences may take place on the Sunday afternoon to enable the election result to be known. For a House of Assembly election, the processing of equipment and the rechecking of votes take several days, and the Hare-Clark count can only commence once the 10-day period for postal votes has concluded.



Post election weekend processes

There are a number of post polling day processes undertaken by the RO:

- Continue processing returned postal votes*
- Undertake final counting of votes
- Complete an election report
- Complete and sign the Returning Officer Return (which includes a full reconciliation of ballot papers)
- Debrief senior staff
- Undertake the declaration of the poll and the return of the writ



*Postal votes can continue to be received by the RO for the 10-day period following polling day as long as the vote was completed before the close of the poll.



Declaration of the Poll and Return of the Writ

Once the result is known, the declaration of the poll can take place. In most Legislative Council elections, this is around the middle of the week following polling day. For a House of Assembly election, this is a few days after the Hare-Clark scrutiny has been completed.

Once the election is known the returning officer writes the names of the successful candidate(s) on the back of the Writ to be returned to the Electoral Commissioner, who will return it to the Governor.



Glossary

Hare-Clark -

A system of counting votes when each division has more than one elected representative. (e.g. Tasmania's House of Assembly)

Mobile Polling -

A type of early voting where voting services are taken to people who can't make it to a polling place (e.g. hospitals and nursing homes).

Scrutiny -

The processes of counting votes, including processing postal votes, checking ballot paper formality and distributing voter preferences.

Writ -

A legal document signed by the Governor, directing the Returning Officer to run an election. It has electoral details like the date of the election and the date the result must be known.

Return of Writ -

When an election is completed the Writ is returned to the Governor with the names of the successful candidates who will now be Members of Parliament.

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