

## Glossary of Electoral Terms

<b>Absent vote</b>	A vote made at a polling place by an elector who is outside his or her own district on election day.
<b>Absolute majority</b>	More than 50% of the total formal vote.
<b>Ballot box</b>	The sealed container into which an elector places a completed ballot paper.
<b>Ballot paper</b>	The paper printed for an election showing the candidates' name and (where possible) parties which a voter marks to record his/her vote.
<b>Bi-cameral</b>	Parliamentary system organised on a two house/chamber basis.
<b>By-election</b>	An election held to fill a casual vacancy. (See casual vacancy)
<b>Candidate</b>	A person who is nominated for an election to Parliament.
<b>Casual vacancy</b>	A vacancy in a Parliamentary district usually caused by retirement, death or resignation of the member for that district.
<b>Coalition</b>	A combination of two or more parties in Parliament, usually to form a government or opposition.
<b>Compulsory enrolment</b>	Every person who is entitled to have his/her name placed on the roll must fill in and sign an enrolment claim card and send it to the Electoral Registrar within 21 days of becoming entitled to enrol. (A penalty applies for failing to enrol)
<b>Compulsory voting</b>	Once enrolled to vote, voting or attendance at a polling booth is compulsory. A penalty applies for failing to vote without a valid reason.
<b>Constitutional laws</b>	A statement of the fundamental laws governing a state. The NSW Constitution is embodied in an Act of Parliament. It established the framework for the system of government in the State, eg two houses of Parliament.
<b>Court of Disputed Returns</b>	A body of Judges of the Supreme Court who establish a court to hear petitions from electors regarding the validity of an election.
<b>Declared Institution</b>	A hospital, nursing home or other Institution which is visited by Electoral Officials for the purpose of taking votes from residents who are unable to attend a polling booth.
<b>Declaration of poll</b>	An announcement made by the Returning Officer proclaiming the successful candidate elected as the member for that district.
<b>Democracy</b>	Government on behalf of the people by their elected representatives.
<b>Disputed returns</b>	A challenge regarding the validity of a Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council election. (See Court of Disputed Returns)
<b>District</b>	For the Legislative Assembly, 93 geographical areas containing approximately equal numbers of voters. For the Legislative Council, the district is the whole State.
<b>Division</b>	Geographical areas containing approximately equal numbers of voters as defined for federal electoral purposes.
<b>Donkey vote</b>	A term used to describe a ballot paper marked with preferences for candidates without consideration for their policies or abilities. A classic donkey vote is one which records preferences straight down the ballot paper in the same order as the names are printed.

## Glossary of Electoral Terms (continued)

<b>Election</b>	Selection by vote of a person or persons to hold political office.
<b>Elector</b>	A person who is entitled to vote at an election.
<b>Electoral Commission</b>	The NSW Government department responsible for overseeing the conduct of parliamentary, local government, industrial, statutory and miscellaneous elections and administering other electoral matters.
<b>Electoral Commissioner</b>	The Statutory Officer appointed to manage the conduct of parliamentary and other elections and to provide for electoral education and research.
<b>Electoral district</b>	One of the 93 Legislative Assembly electorates.
<b>Electoral offence</b>	A breach of electoral law as specified in the <i>Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912</i> .
<b>Electoral roll</b>	The certified list of persons eligible to vote at an election. The rolls are maintained by the Australian Electoral Commission.
<b>Electoral district/Electorate</b>	The population of electors or the region in which electors live. Electorates have clearly defined boundaries which are shown on electoral district maps.
<b>Enrolment</b>	The act of enrolling or having one's name added to the list of electors entitled to vote.
<b>Electors/Voters</b>	Those entitled to be placed on an electoral roll and vote in an election.
<b>Federal government</b>	At Federation in 1901 the States handed over certain powers to the central or federal government for administration on an Australia wide basis while reserving other functions for State government responsibility.
<b>Federation</b>	The unification of Australian colonies which formed the Australian nation on 1 January, 1901.
<b>Formal vote</b>	A ballot paper at an election or referendum which has been correctly marked, according to instructions, and contributes to the outcome of the poll.
<b>Franchise</b>	The right to vote at an election or referendum. Extending the franchise means allowing more people to vote. For example, in 1972 when the voting age in South Australia was lowered from 21 to 18, it extended the franchise to 18, 19 and 20 year olds.
<b>General election</b>	In NSW, General elections are held for all Legislative Assembly seats (93) and half (21) of the seats in the Legislative Council every four years.
<b>Government</b>	The exercise of political authority over the actions and affairs of the people. There are three levels of government in Australia - federal, State and local.
<b>House of Representatives</b>	The lower house of Federal Parliament.
<b>How-to-Vote card</b>	A simulated copy of the ballot paper showing an elector how to mark the paper and vote for a particular candidate or party.
<b>Independent</b>	A candidate for election to, or a member of, Parliament who is not a member of a political party.
<b>Informal vote</b>	A ballot paper which is either left blank or is incorrectly marked. These ballot papers are excluded from the count and therefore do not contribute to the election of a candidate.
<b>Legislative Assembly</b>	The lower house of Parliament in NSW consists of 93 members, one elected from each electoral district.

## Glossary of Electoral Terms (continued)

<b>Legislative Council</b>	The upper house of Parliament in NSW. It has 42 councillors elected for an eight year term, half of whom are elected at each NSW General election.
<b>Mandate</b>	The support or commission given to a government and its policies through an electoral victory.
<b>Marginal seat</b>	A seat held by a member of Parliament with a small majority of votes.
<b>Members of Parliament</b>	All representatives elected by the people to serve them in Parliament.
<b>Nomination</b>	The process by which a person applies to become a candidate for election.
<b>Opposition</b>	The party or parties which do not hold sufficient seats in Parliament to lead a government.
<b>Optional preferential voting</b>	A voting system in which an elector shows by numbers his/her preference for individual candidates but need not show a preference for all candidates listed for the vote to be formal.
<b>Ordinary vote</b>	A vote recorded in the normal manner in a polling booth on election day.
<b>Parliament</b>	The Legislative body, consisting of the elected representatives of the people, which determines the laws governing the nation or State. The persons or political party holding the majority of seats forms the government.
<b>Political party</b>	An organised group with a common political philosophy which seeks to win and retain public office for itself and its leaders. Party organisations support or endorse candidates for elections who, if elected, usually vote as a group for its policies in Parliament. The party with the greatest numbers in Parliament forms the government.
<b>Poll</b>	An election.
<b>Polling place</b>	A building such as a school designated as a place to which voters go during an election to cast their votes.
<b>Postal vote</b>	Electors who are outside their electoral district on election day, or are unable to attend a polling place during polling hours may send a vote by post. Voters must apply for a postal vote prior to election day.
<b>Pre-poll vote</b>	Electors who won't be able to vote on election day for certain specified reasons can vote before election day at the office of a Returning Officer or a special pre-poll voting centre.
<b>Preferential vote</b>	A vote for all candidates in order of preference. Preferences of candidates with the least number of votes are then distributed until one candidate has sufficient votes to be elected. This system of vote counting is used in the NSW Legislative Assembly elections, where a candidate needs an absolute majority to be elected.
<b>Premier</b>	The Leader of a State government.
<b>President</b>	The officer responsible for the conduct of business in the Legislative Council.
<b>Proportional representation</b>	A system of voting designed to elect representatives in proportion to the amount of support each has in the electorate. This system of voting is used in the Legislative Council elections.

## Glossary of Electoral Terms (continued)

<b>Quota</b>	The proportion or percentage of votes required by a candidate to be elected to the Legislative Council. (See proportional representation) The proportion or percentage of votes required for a candidate to be elected to Parliament.
<b>Recount</b>	A second or further count of votes in an election.
<b>Redistribution</b>	Changes in boundaries of electoral districts accommodating population changes in line with the principle that the number of electors in each district must not vary from a predetermined number by more than 3%.
<b>Referendum</b>	Vote taken to allow electors to express their view on a particular subject or issue. Some alterations to the Constitution can only be made after approval in a referendum.
<b>Registered General Postal Voter</b>	Electors who have a permanent physical disability or who live in remote areas of the State may apply to the Electoral Commission to have their names included on a register of general postal voters.
<b>Registrar</b>	Person who has the responsibility of maintaining electoral rolls in NSW.
<b>Return of writ</b>	When the election is decided, the writ is returned to the Governor with the name(s) of the successful candidate(s).
<b>Returning Officer</b>	The Electoral Officer responsible for conducting an election for a Legislative Assembly district or the Legislative Council.
<b>Roll</b>	See Electoral Roll.
<b>Scrutineer</b>	A person appointed by a candidate to ensure that procedures and counting are undertaken in a proper manner.
<b>Seat</b>	A seat in Parliament held by an elected member or the member's electoral district.
<b>Secret ballot</b>	A vote made in secret – first adopted by South Australia in 1857.
<b>Senate</b>	The upper house of Federal Parliament.
<b>Speaker</b>	The officer responsible for the business of the Legislative Assembly.
<b>Suffrage</b>	The right to vote in public elections.
<b>Tally room</b>	A room where voting figures are collected and provisional results are announced.
<b>Term</b>	The length of time a Parliament may sit before having to call an election. NSW has fixed four year terms.
<b>Voluntary voting</b>	The right to elect to cast a vote as one sees fit. (Compare with compulsory voting)
<b>Vote</b>	The process of choosing/selecting a candidate for political office.
<b>Writ</b>	The document by which the Governor (or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in the case of by-elections) directs Returning Officers to conduct an election. The Governor issues writs on the advice of the government.