

Reference – 2020/6852

Update on Coronavirus Impact on AEC services – Industrial elections

The AEC would like to thank all registered organisations for your ongoing understanding and support during the coronavirus-imposed restrictions over the last few months. The health and wellbeing of our clients, staff, contract partners and the community was and remains our number one priority.

On 29 June 2020 I wrote to inform you that with the easing of restrictions, the AEC had recommenced high-level planning and election scheduling for the remainder of 2020. This included establishing draft timetables for a first tranche of elections to be conducted, and in some instances we had started to socialise the draft timetable with organisations.

Unfortunately the recent escalation of COVID-19 cases and increased restrictions means that the AEC is once again in the position of having to put elections on hold. I am writing to inform you that the cessation period which ended on 30 June 2020 will now be extended to 30 September 2020.

I am aware that the rules of many organisations provide for previously elected office-holders to continue in office until a replacement is elected, and therefore a delay will not significantly impact the governance of the organisation. I am also aware that some organisations have approached the Fair Work Commission for Rulebook changes to incorporate such provisions.

However, where elections are essential to ensure the continuing governance of the organisation, the AEC will work with those organisations and the Registered Organisations Commission to ensure these critical positions proceed to election. The AEC will be in touch with organisations with elections due in 2020 to discuss.

It is now apparent that various elements of restrictions are likely to remain indefinitely, based on advice from health authorities. As such, the AEC will be facilitating longer term changes in how we administer industrial elections to support registered organisations.

I will write shortly to outline some of those changes. In the interim, one element I can share now is fast-tracking the deployment of a self-service portal through which nominations can be lodged. The ability to lodge nominations electronically, with electronic signatures, will mean the AEC has confidence that all eligible stakeholders can nominate if they choose and the AEC can manage the nominations even in a work from home scenario.

Your patience is appreciated as we work through the evolving impacts of the coronavirus-imposed restrictions.

Please direct any questions you may have to industrial.elections@aec.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Gina Dario
Assistant Commissioner
Australian Electoral Commission

24 July 2020