

# FACT SHEET

## Electoral Amendment (Alternative Voting Procedures) Bill 2025

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Electoral Act 2004* to allow the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to approve alternative voting procedures that are reasonable and appropriate to facilitate voting by voters who are experiencing barriers to accessing traditional voting services. This would enable but is not limited to the approval of electronic voting methods such as telephone voting.

The proposed amendments address concerns raised by disability advocacy groups about the challenges experienced by voters with vision impairment or 'print disability' and also the lack of choice faced by voters with such an impairment in regional and remote areas.

The proposed new provisions would allow for a telephone voting service to be provided for use by electors with disability, and provide flexibility to the Commission to provide additional voting services to more electors who are experiencing accessibility barriers.

Currently, the *Electoral Act 2004* enables the Commission to approve alternative voting procedures in the following circumstances:

- Under section 113 the Commission may approve any procedures that are reasonable and appropriate to assist electors at polling places who are unable to vote without assistance.
- Under sections 131 and 132 the Commission may approve procedures to enable electors, where practicable, to vote when they are interstate, overseas, or in a remote location such as Antarctica.

The proposed amendments, in line with the provisions outlined above, will provide the Commission with the broad power to approve 'alternative' voting procedures if satisfied an elector does not have a reasonable opportunity to vote under other provisions of the Act.

In doing so, to help ensure the integrity of any proposed system, the Commission must be satisfied that the procedures are warranted, taking into account the practicality, security and resources required.

The Commission has indicated that should the amendments be enacted, it anticipates a priority expansion of telephone voting services for electors with a print disability as an initial step in addressing their barriers to voting.

During the public consultation process for this Bill, a number of changes were made to the consultation draft. Key changes include:

- A new object clause to provide guidance as to the underlying purpose of the division;
- Establishing that an accessibility and inclusion organisation may raise with the Commission the need for an alternative voting procedure;
- Providing that the Commission is to, where practicable, consult with accessibility and inclusion organisations in considering and making alternative voting procedures.

The inclusion of an object clause to the Division, along with the explicit reference to consultation, provides guidance to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. However these amendments do not undermine the independence of the Commission.

The amendments will commence on Royal Assent.