



Office of the
**Custodial
Inspector**
Tasmania

Overcoming barriers to voting in prison - review report 2025



Easy Read information

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The Office of the Custodial Inspector acknowledges Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania.

We recognise their continuing connection to Land, Sea, Waterways, Sky and Culture and pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

About this information



The Custodial Inspector wrote this.

When you see the words 'we' or 'us' it means the Office of the Custodial Inspector.



We wrote this information in a way that is easy-to-read.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



Some hard words are written in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.

We explain what the hard words mean.



You can ask for help to read this paper.

You could ask a friend, family member, support person or advocate.

Why we did a review



In Australia the law says that adults must vote.

When we visited some **custodial centres**, we heard that lots of people were not voting.

A **custodial centre** is a place where you are held if you have *or* may have broken the law.

They are often called prisons.

If you are in a custodial centre, that means you are in custody.

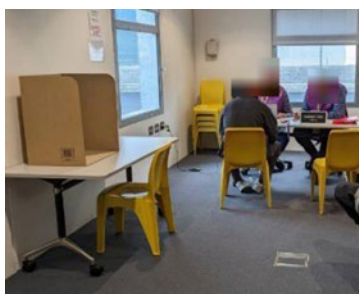


Many people in custody are not voting.



Voting is your right, it is important.

Voting helps people have a say in what happens in Australia.



Voting in custody should be easy and done the right way.

Making it easier to vote in custody helps people have their say.



We want to change some of the rules so all people in custody can vote.

The review



We looked into taking away **barriers** to voting in prison.

Barriers are the things that stop you from doing what you want to do.



We made some **recommendations**.

Recommendations are things we think need to happen to make things better.

Recommendations

We made 7 recommendations about the right to vote while in custodial centres.

Recommendation 1



The **Tasmania Prison Service** should work with the **Tasmanian Electoral Commission**, so people know how to vote when in custody.

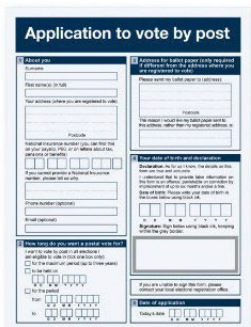
We call the **Tasmania Prison Service TPS** for short.

We call the **Tasmanian Electoral Commission TEC** for short.



The TEC runs the voting in Tasmania for local and state elections.

Recommendation 2

A form titled "Application to vote by post" with sections for personal details, address, and contact information. It includes checkboxes for "I am a prisoner" and "I am a person with a mental health issue".

There should be voting information given to people in custody.

They should get:

- enrolment forms
- free calls to the TEC so they can ask for help **enrolling**.

Enrolling is signing up to vote.

Getting help filling in enrolment forms is important.

Recommendation 3



The TPS should change the **Director's Standing Orders**.

We call it **DSO** for short.

The **DSO** is a part of a law under the *Corrections Act 1997*.



The change should make sure that mail from the TEC is not opened.

This helps your vote stay private.

Recommendation 4



The DSOs should be clear about how people in custody can vote.

This will help staff know what to do when there is an election.

Recommendation 5



The TPS and the TEC should work together on a **Memorandum of Understanding**.

A **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** is a written agreement between two groups.

This will help make sure mobile polling services keep coming into prisons.

Recommendation 6



The TPS should work with the TEC to make sure people can vote in different ways.



This could include voting on the phone.

Recommendation 7



The Tasmanian Parliament should make sure everyone in a custodial centre can vote.

This would help people to:

- stay connected to their community
- be treated fairly.

Voting in prison now



People on **remand** and people who have a sentence of under 3 years are allowed to vote.

Remand means a person is kept in a custodial centre while they wait for their court case to finish.

They can vote in:

- federal elections
- Tasmanian state elections
- local elections.



People who have a sentence of 3 years or more cannot vote.



Until 2023 you could only vote in Tasmanian prisons by postal vote.

Mobile polling services started in 2023.

Barriers to voting



Barriers to voting for some people in custody are:

- not being able to read and understand forms
- not much information on elections
- no access to voting in person or getting voting packs
- not being able to call the TEC to ask for help.



Full report



This information is just a snapshot of a bigger report.



To read the full report you can go to:
www.custodialinspector.tas.gov.au



Contact us:

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