

Who picks the candidates, and how does preselection work?

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Ever wondered how a political party chooses and allocates who will run for a seat at the federal election?

Many questions can be asked with regards to how your local member is chosen to be represented; how did they get picked? What was the process? And, for the sake of the exercise, what is the process called?

The process is called preselection and Matthew Dower has saved you the tedious hours of reading through constitutions of each state branch of each party, to give you this breakdown of how preselection works.

So, how do parties pick candidates?

Preselection is a critical component of modern politics, as it is a pathway to the executive position in the political system (in Australia's case, the Prime Minister). The candidate who is nominated to contest a seat is called the endorsed candidate. A reselection procedure is where current candidates are required to go through the preselection process again to gain the party's support.

To be considered eligible by the AEC candidates must be 18 years or older, an Australian citizen, an elector entitled to vote and either part of a registered party or independent. Nominees also need to pay a fee to nominate for preselection. Lower house candidates have to pay \$500 to nominate, whereas it's \$1000 for a Senate candidate.

Each party has its own way of picking candidates and many of these vary between state branches. Parties have their own constitutions which describe how they operate so we have explored how pre-selection is structured differently across the board for the three major parties.

The Greens

Greens WA

All Greens members can vote to decide who, out of the people who nominate to be candidates, get to represent the party. Only members who live in the relevant electorate can vote for who is chosen to run for that electorate.

All party members are sorted into 'Regional Groups', based on the federal electorates. These groups run the ballots and the 'Reps Council' runs the ballot for senate candidates.

Greens Victoria

State Council for the Greens Victoria has the power to determine how candidates are preselected. In other words, the party may choose to adopt different methods for different electorates or positions on a ticket in any given election. Unless a specific method is chosen, an electronic or postal ballot takes place. This is the standard practice but it could vary.

All candidates must be members of the Vic Greens and cannot stand for local government, state or federal electorates if endorsed by the State Council.

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The ALP

WA Labor

Labor have been pushing in recent years for women to make up a significant proportion of the party. From 1 January 2021, the percentage of women candidates for Labor for seats will be at least 50%

A member who wishes to nominate submits an Expression of Interest to the Administrative Committee. Names of candidates are then sent to the State Executive and Local Electors. If only one candidate applies for an electorate, Labor have the choices of following procedures for seats with more than one candidate, defer a decision, endorse a candidate, re-open nominations, or to decide to not contest the seat.

Local Electors and the State Executive can vote in the ballot if there are more than 40 Local Voters. If there are less than 40 then the ballot is carried out by the State Executive. The State Executive carries out senate preselections.

NSW Labor

To be eligible for lower house candidacy, a person must have

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Liberal Party

Liberal WA

The Liberal WA branch begins its preselection process by setting dates for applications to be submitted. Applications go to the State Director who must accept the application as correct or refer it as 'defective' to the State Executive.

For Lower House candidates, a committee formed by the chair of the Selection Committee of State Council delegates, divisional delegates from the electorate, branch delegates, party member delegates, and two University Club branch delegates if a university is situated within the electorate.

The selection committee votes in a ballot with all candidates listed. Once voted, the committee makes its recommendations to the State Council, which must be signed off by the chair of the selection committee. The committee can vote for no candidates to be endorsed, one candidate be endorsed, or if more than one candidate becomes endorsed, reasons have to be provided as to why the committee has come to the particular conclusion, with a recommended preference.

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Greens Tasmania

Preselection run by the state elections coordinator and all members in the eligible area are notified and asked to put in an expression of interest by a set date. Tasmanian Greens elections coordinator Simon Burnett says applicants are then asked to supply information including a references from two other party members, a police check, a signed contract with the party, a resume and responses to selection criteria.

All prospective candidates are then interviewed by a team of at least three other members. Then, all members who have been living in the area and been members of the party for more than six months are sent a preferential ballot paper. The votes are then counted, and the returning officer will report to the state executive, who then ratifies the winning candidate. If a 'Seek Other Candidate' is voted on, nominations are re-opened.

Greens ACT

In the ACT, nominations for candidacy are called at least 21 days before the closing date. Preselection is by a preferential ballot by all members who can attend a meeting after the distribution of the ballot papers to meet the candidates.

According to the ACT Greens constitution, "the order that the candidates are listed on the ballot paper will be determined by the preselection ballot".

Greens NSW

To be considered all nominees must be a member of the NSW Greens branch. An electronic ballots are held for senate candidates, with the potential for a postal ballot should issues arise.

On the ballot form, all candidates must be listed in a random order, with a "seek other candidate" option available at the end of the list of candidates.

The Greens NSW constitution suggests a similar preferential method is used for lower house candidates.

Greens QLD

The Queensland Campaign Committee is responsible for the preselection of candidates. The committee determines if and when a preselection for an

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one year of continuous financial membership, be a financial member of a trade union, be nominated by five people who live in the electorate and be a member of NSW ALP, and sign particular declarations.

The time and place of Branch ballots are decided by the Branch but polling must be for at least four consecutive hours. Branch members voting in the ballot are to be given seven days notice of the time, place and date of the ballot.

Once members have cast their votes and put their votes in the ballot boxes, the ballot papers will be collected and counted in one lot.

The first Senate candidates are selected by Annual Conference (process is in the hands of the executive), with the additional candidates to be chosen by the Administrative Council subsequent to the constitution.

Victoria Labor

Victorian Labor Operations Manager Christopher Jones broke their branch's preselection down into how a weighting process works from the votes cast.

"The Victorian Branch selects candidates for the House of Representatives, the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and Municipal Electorates, by members of the Public Office Selection Committee sitting and voting after a plebiscite of local voters residing in the electoral area concerned with a weighting of 1/100 of the total vote of the valid local votes cast."

Where in any selection ballot only one candidate is to be selected, the method of election shall be by preferential ballot. For an application for the Senate/Upper House, a nomination form must be submitted and signed by any thirty members living in the electorate/state.

Tasmania Labor

For the House of Representatives and Senate, there are two components to the preselections process; a local component and a central component.

The local component consists of all eligible members of the party in the

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In the event of a tie, the chair will give cast a deciding vote.

Names of candidates defeated become confidential upon completion of the process.

Liberals SA

The call is put out for nominations by the State Executive. Once all nominations are checked off by the State Executive, candidates for HoR or Legislative assembly are selected by the HoR or House of Assembly committees. The members who can vote have to be financial members within the last 12 months, and must have been enrolled in the address within the electorate in relation.

The voting is carried out on a preferential ballot paper. Once all the votes are counted, a winner is endorsed as the candidate for the seat. For upper house nominations, the State Council chooses the candidates to run by a series of "secret exhaustive ballots" in accordance with the constitution.

Liberals Victoria

For lower house seats, applications must be advertised. A vote is carried out by members who live in the electorate on the provision they have been members for two years. This results in endorsement of a candidate unless the Administrative Committee deems the candidate inappropriate. If it does then there is a process of reconsideration and applications open again.

Senate voting is carried out by the State Council, where candidates have the opportunity to address the committee. The voting is carried out by secret ballot with votes cast "free of any direction, restriction or undertaking".

Liberals ACT

A nominee can nominate for more than one electorate (but be preselected for only one). Once all the candidates have been reviewed, preselectors can vote at either the Divisional Headquarters or Preselection Meeting(s). Votes are cast preferentially and the votes are collated by the Returning Officer, who reports to the Management Committee and arranges to publish the endorsed candidate for the division. >>

electorate can be conducted, and nominations are open to members of the party.

All nominations are given to the Returning Officer who determines the roll for nominated candidates. The Returning Officer can apply to do an online, postal or proxy voting system, but must give at least three weeks notice of a meeting or closing of an online ballot which will select a candidate.

If a normal ballot is in place, voting occurs and the votes are then collated by the returning Officer, who sends the results of selection to the Campaign Secretary. The Queensland Campaign Committee endorses a candidate from there, and should any appeals arise, the committee looks after the processes of endorsements and appeals.

With regards to Senate preselection, a different committee called the Candidate Review Panel screen initial nominees to see if they are worthy nominations or not. The decision by the Candidate Review Panel is subject to appeal if people want to have an alternative vote. After this happens, a ballot draw is cast within the party.

Greens NT

The NT branch of the Greens party doesn't display a constitution on their website for the general public and didn't respond to our enquiries.

Greens SA

The SA branch of the Greens party doesn't display a constitution on their website for the general public and didn't respond to our enquiries.

relevant electorate, local government area of state (Senate). The central component is made up of the full membership of the State Conference, and the total formal vote cast by the local and central components are combined equally. Voting is conducted by preferential ballot.

ACT Labor

ACT Labor Secretary Matt Byrne says candidates for federal elections are preselected by a ballot of members.

"For both house of reps and senate preselections members must be enrolled in their relevant electorate and must have been in the ALP for a minimum of 12 months and have attended a number of party meetings in order to be eligible to vote," Mr Byrne said.

"We are different to most other states because we do not split the preselection between different bodies of the party, we leave the vote only to eligible members."

SA Labor

The South Australian branch of the ALP doesn't display a constitution on their website for the general public and didn't respond to our enquiries.

The process is exactly the same for House of Representatives and the Senate.

Liberals NSW

Selection is managed by committees.

For a regional/country lower house seat, a selection committee is formed from members with the relevant Federal Electorate Branch, Federal Electorate Conference, State Electorate Branch and State Electorate Conference. Some members from the State Executive are involved but the process involves no one from State Council.

For a Senate seat, the selection committee includes the State Executive (except the State Parliamentary Leader, the Treasurer, president of Liberal Local Government Assembly, and the Federal President if not a member of the division), four members elected by the Federal Electorate Branch and Federal Electorate Conference, and a State Council delegate if they're appointed by a State Executive member.

Liberal-Nationals QLD

When applications for candidacy are submitted, an Applicant Review Committee assesses all applications. The one of two processes is used; a plebiscite by preferential postal ballot, or selection will be conducted by a Selection Committee that uses a secret ballot on an absolute majority basis.

If two or more applicants have the same amount of votes, and the ballot has taken place three times without the tie being broke, the applicants names are written on a piece of paper and put into a container, with the Chairman of the Selection Committee drawing a name at random.

Country Liberal Party NT

For both houses, the Central Council advertises nominations. All candidates must be CLP members. According to the constitution, Central Council makes the selection "in such manner as Central Council may decide". The constitution rules out proxy votes.

Liberals Tasmania

The Tasmanian branch doesn't display a constitution on their website for the general public and didn't respond to our enquiries.