

Computer voting in the ACT

Computer voting was used for the first time at the ACT Legislative Assembly election in October 2001. This was the first computer voting system to be used for a parliamentary election in Australia. Computer voting was also used in the October 2004 election, taking 28,116 votes, and again in the October 2008 election, taking 43,820 votes.



The ACT's electronic voting and counting system (EVACS) uses standard personal computers as voting terminals, with voters using a barcode to authenticate their votes. Voting terminals are linked to a server in each polling location using a secure local area network. No votes are taken or transmitted over a public network like the Internet.

How is voting by computer different from ballot paper voting?

After you have your name marked on the electoral roll you are given a card with a barcode printed on it instead of a paper ballot. You use a private voting booth – equipped with a computer screen, cut-down keyboard and a barcode reader.

Swiping the card through the barcode reader brings up the ballot paper for your electorate and registers that a vote is about to be made.

By navigating the cursor with up, down and across keys you select the candidates you wish to vote for. When the cursor is on a candidate of your choice you use the *select* key to place a number in the square. The first candidate you select will be number 1, the second number 2 and so on. You can select as many candidates as you like. When you hit the *finish* key the screen will confirm your choices. You then have an opportunity to go back and change your choices or start again.

If you do not choose any candidates, your vote will be counted as informal.

Your vote is only recorded on the computer when you swipe your card for a second time. At that point you cannot change your vote. The swipe card can only be used to cast one vote.



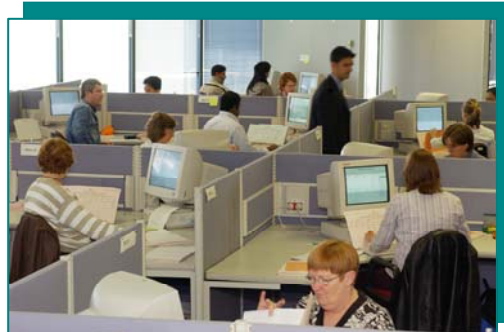
At the end of election day a data disk is removed from the polling place server and loaded into the counting program where your vote is counted. This process saves paper and data entry time and gives a fast and completely accurate result. The result is more accurate than a paper ballot because there is no possibility of misreading handwritten numbers. Numbers cannot be repeated or left out of a sequence.



Computer counting of the votes

Electronic counting, which combines the counting of electronic votes and paper ballots, was also used in the ACT for the first time at the 2001 election.

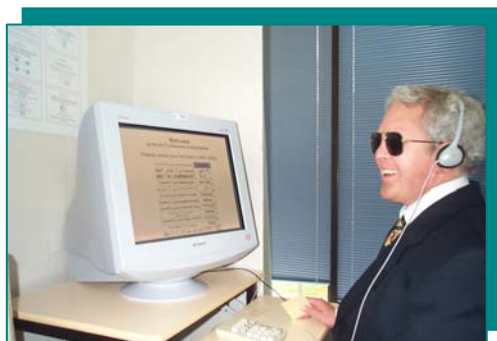
For the 2008 election preferences shown on paper ballots were electronically scanned. This data was combined with the results of the electronic voting, and the computer program distributed preferences under the ACT's Hare-Clark electoral system.



Can I e-vote in secret if I am vision impaired or incapacitated?

Yes – EVACS will even allow someone who is totally blind to vote independently, in secret.

Every electronic polling place is equipped with a voting terminal that can be used by a person seated in the supplied chair or in a wheelchair. Each of these terminals has a 21 inch monitor (compared to the 17 inch monitors used in the other screens). These terminals are also equipped with headphones broadcasting recorded spoken instructions.



If you use the headphones, the system invites you to press any key on the voting keypad to hear a description of what that key does. Each function key is also labelled with a tactile label indicating its purpose.

When you have finished learning the functions of all the keys, swiping the barcode will bring up the ballot paper screen.

When the ballot paper appears on screen for the first time, you are informed of the name of the electorate and the instructions printed on the screen. As you move around the ballot paper with the direction keys, the audio broadcasts the group letter, registered party name and candidate name highlighted by the cursor. When you indicate preferences by pressing the "select" key, the system also broadcasts the preference number assigned to each candidate.

When you finish allocating preferences, pressing the "finish" key brings up the confirmation screen and the system will read out your preferences in numerical order. You can then choose to return to the ballot paper and correct any errors or keep voting for more candidates, or confirm the vote by swiping the barcode for a second time.

There is full disabled access at all polling places where computer voting is available.
