Voting in the Federal Election 2010

For a lot of you (your UNEG Inc Pres and Vice Pres included!) this will be your first time voting in a federal election. Voting should be an easy process – but when you’re living away from home here at UNE, chances are you might not be enrolled in this electorate and you may not even be enrolled in this state.

The first thing to note is that voting is compulsory! There is a fine if you do not vote and as much as this might seem unfair and you might not care, the system ensures that we all have a say in who wins government.

However, you must be enrolled to vote. If you are unsure whether you are enrolled, you can check at the Australian Electoral Commissions website at: https://oevf.aec.gov.au/.

Remember: if your given name doesn’t work, try your full name. If that doesn’t work, you can call the AEC on: 13 23 26. The AEC send enrolment forms to everyone when you turn 18, so even if you can’t remember filling it out, there is a good chance you have. Further, if you have voted in any election before, either at a state or local council level it means you are enrolled. Filling out the forms once means you are enrolled for all Australian elections that apply to you.

Polling Places

When you enter the polling place you will be directed to an issuing table and an AEC official will ask you a couple of questions. First you will be asked your full name, then where you live and whether or not you have voted in this election before. If you have moved recently, don’t be surprised if your current address is not on the roll, AEC officials are trained and very patient – if you explain your situation you will get it sorted, don’t be afraid to look like an idiot. For most of us, unless you have changed your details when you moved to Armidale, your home address will be the one on the roll.

The Getup! Case

Without going into a lengthy explanation, if you tried to enrol to vote after 8pm on the 19th of July but before 8pm on the 26th of July with the intention of voting in the 2010 Federal Election, now you can! You should have already received a letter from the AEC explaining what you need to do but if not give them a call. The physical rolls have already been printed so if you are one of the estimated 100 000 people now eligible to vote, when you arrive at a polling station on election day you will have to fill out what is called a declaration vote (explained below). It is advisable to take that letter with you, when you go to vote on the day.
Voting

I’m enrolled in the New England Division.

If you are enrolled to vote in Armidale or surrounding areas (New England division), all you have to do is show up at one of the many polling places in Armidale (see below for the exact locations) and follow the instructions found on your ballot papers. Remember to have your identification with you so you can be verified as being enrolled in the New England division in order to cast your vote. If you are in college, your closest polling booth will be Austin College. Voting will take place in the dining hall.

I’m enrolled in a Division outside New England, but in NSW.

If you are enrolled to vote in New South Wales, but in a division other than New England, you are an absentee voter and must cast a declaration vote. This could be for example, that you are from Coffs Harbour and enrolled to vote in the division of Cowper, rather than New England here in Armidale but now reside in Armidale for Uni. If this is the case you will have to cast what is known as a declaration vote. Your ballot papers are placed in the declaration vote envelope and forwarded to the division in which you claim enrolment.

The process for declaration votes is kind of long and complicated. A declaration vote happens in two parts – one part for you to complete and one part for the AEC official to complete.

In your section, you will be asked to fill out all of your details clearly and correctly. It will ask for your name, former name (if relevant), date of birth, address where you live currently, your enrolled address (that is, the address in the division you are enrolled to vote), when you moved (if relevant) and a day time phone number. Make sure you write clearly, ask for help if you don’t understand any part, and most importantly sign the envelope. Your vote will not count if the enveloped is not signed.

The polling official will ensure you complete all sections of the envelope, and make sure your enrolled division is correct by checking in the division finder (so don’t worry if you’re not 100% sure of the name of your division). The polling official will print the name of your division on the envelope once it has been confirmed and witness your signature, ensuring the polling location details are shown on the envelope. You will then be given the correct House of Representatives ballot paper by the polling official. You will also be given a ballot paper for the Senate. The polling official will initial the front of your ballot papers and direct you to a polling booth to cast your vote. Once you have voted for both the House of Representatives and the Senate, fold your papers so they cannot be seen and return them to the Polling Official. They will be inserted into the declaration envelope before being placed in the ballot box.

I’m enrolled interstate.

If you are enrolled to vote in a state other than New South Wales, you will have to cast your vote at a specific interstate voting centre that has the House of Representatives and Senate
ballot papers for your division. In Armidale, that is at 112-114 Beardy St (the mall, towards Marsh St).

You can vote early in person, if on Election Day:

- You will be outside the electorate you are enrolled to vote in
- You will be more than 8kms from a polling location
- You are travelling or cannot leave your place of work
- You are seriously ill, infirm, or approaching childbirth (or are caring for someone who is)
- You are a patient in hospital and cannot vote at the hospital
- You are in prison serving a sentence of less than three years or are otherwise detained
- You are unable to attend a polling place due to religious reasons
- Or if you are a silent elector or have a reasonable fear for your safety.

You can only vote early at specific locations. In Armidale, this is 112-114 Beardy St, or the AEC divisional office in Marsh St. If you are travelling on the day or are outside the electorate and can/have not voted early (pre-polled) you must still vote. There are polling places in every city and town around the country; if you drop in and explain your situation to AEC officials you will be directed to cast an absentee vote (see above). Polling places are usually located in local school halls, churches, public buildings, and are well marked.

How to Vote

House of Representatives

Voting in the House Representatives occurs on the smaller green ballot paper. It is compulsory preferential, which means that you must rank all the candidates in order of preference. You must place a number in every box; not a cross, tick or any other marking or your vote will not be counted (it will be informal).

Senate

The senate ballot paper will be the long white paper you receive. You have two options, you can either vote above or below the line. If you choose to vote above the line you are choosing to vote for a party, and let the party distribute preferences as they see fit. You must place a one in the box next to the party of your choice and no other markings. If you vote below the line, you must vote in order of preference for every person listed on the ballot. They will be listed in columns according to party, but you will have to choose them all individually. This is a lengthy process but allows you to direct preferences as you see fit. As with the House of Representatives you must write numbers, not ticks, crosses or any other markings or your vote will be informal (will not be counted), and you must not double up. If you make a mistake you can ask for another ballot.
You can practise voting online before you head to the polling place if you’re still not 100% sure on the actual process of voting. Visit the AEC website as many times as you like: (http://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/How_to_vote/voting_practice.htm)

**Where do I vote?**

Saturday August 21st is Election Day! For some people, it is an exciting day – they may feel particularly passionate about voting, they may be drawn to a particular political party or individual, or they may have actively been involved in campaigning. More than likely though, for a lot of you, having to cast your vote is just another thing you have to fit into a busy Saturday, filled with ball recoveries, work, netball, football, or catching up on readings.

No matter how you feel about voting being compulsory in Australia, it is, and you will be fined if you fail to vote.

Polling places are open from 8am until 6pm. The polling places in Armidale are:

**Armidale Town Hall**

Rusden St ARMIDALE, 2350
Full wheelchair assisted

**Armidale City Public School**

Faulkner St ARMIDALE, 2350
Wheelchair access

**Newling Public School**

80 Chapel St ARMIDALE, 2350
Wheelchair assisted

**Ben Venue Public School**

Erskine St ARMIDALE, 2350
Full Wheelchair access

**Armidale Hospital (Seminar Room)**

Rusden St ARMIDALE, 2350
Wheelchair assisted
Autumn Lodge
50 Butler St ARMIDALE, 2350
Full wheelchair access

Drummond Memorial Public School
Rusden St ARMIDALE, 2350
Full Wheelchair access

Austin College
Elm Ave UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND, 2351
Full Wheelchair access

Martins Gully School
Bona Vista Rd ARMIDALE, 2350
Full wheel chair access

Dangarsleigh C.W.A Hall
Dangarsleigh Road, Dangarsleigh, 2350
Wheel chair assisted
Pre-poll locations:

AEC Divisional Office (interstate also)
Level 1 97-101 Faulkner St Armidale
Full wheelchair access

112-114 Beardy St Armidale (the mall) (interstate also)
Full wheelchair access
8:30-6

Key Numbers
The Australian Electoral Commission
13 23 26

Checklist for Voting!

1. Check the AEC website to confirm your enrolment. Take note of your federal electoral division.
2. Find a polling station most appropriate for you, they are open from 8-6
3. Bring photo I.D - a drivers license is preferable to student I.D. because it has your address on it
4. Collect your ballot papers and don’t be afraid to ask for any necessary help
5. VOTE!