

# Overview of the Election Period

Key Stages – 2020 dates – Further Information



There are a number of stages in the election period...

Key Stages	Incumbent Government/Ministers					New Government/Ministers		
		Pre-election period (three months leading up to the election date)	ELECTION DAY	First caretaker period	Government formation talks conclude	Second caretaker period	Ministerial List announced	New Government sworn in
Description	The government has the right to govern until the election. The caretaker convention does not apply. Successive governments have, however, chosen to exercise some restraint in two main areas in the three months before an election: making significant appointments, and government advertising.	The current government remains in office, as it is still the lawful executive authority. Traditionally, governments constrain their actions until the political situation is resolved, in accordance with the “convention on caretaker government”. The normal business of government continues, but any matters requiring significant decisions should be deferred or handled using short-term solutions. If neither of these are possible, decisions should be made only after consultation with other political parties.		The formation of a government is a political decision and must be arrived at by politicians. The Governor-General will rely on public statements by the political parties to ascertain where the support of the House lies, and to appoint a government accordingly.	Once it is clear who will form the next government, the outgoing government should undertake no new policy initiatives, and act on the advice of the incoming government on any important matter that cannot be delayed.	Announcement of the ministers who will be in the incoming government, and the portfolios they will hold.	A ceremony is held where the Governor-General appoints ministers (even when the composition of the government has not greatly changed). The ceremony formally marks the formation and commencement of the new administration and marks the end of the caretaker period. The first Cabinet meeting is usually held the same day.	Parliament is required to meet not later than six weeks after the day fixed for the return of the writs for the election. At the State Opening, the Governor-General delivers the Speech from the Throne, which sets out the new government’s legislative and policy priorities.

## Key dates for the 2020 General Election

Dates	Pre-election period commences (17 July) Final sitting day of the House of Representatives (tbc) House of Representatives is dissolved (6 September)	Overseas voting starts (30 September) Advance voting starts (3 October) Election Day (17 October)	Official election results (6 November) Last date for the return of the writ (12 November) Last date the House of Representatives can meet (24 December)
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## Where to go for more information...

Links	<p>General information about the constitutional and procedural matters applying in an election year, the process of forming and appointing a government following an election, and the resumption of government business is available on the <a href="#">DPMC website</a>.</p> <p>Guidance for those who work in the State services covering what it means to work in the State services before, during, and after an election is available on the <a href="#">SSC website</a>.</p> <p>A recent speech by the Governor-General, Dame Patsy Reddy, covers the government formation process, and the type of public statements by political parties that assist the Governor-General in ascertaining where the support of the House lies. You can read the speech on the <a href="#">Governor-General’s website</a>.</p>
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