ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

2025-26 Annual Report

Electoral Commission of South Australia
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ISSN:	1444-7282 (Print)
	2204-3640 (Online)
Date presented to Minister:	30 September 2026

To:

The Hon Kyam Maher MLC
Deputy Premier
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Attorney-General
Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector
Minister for Arts
Special Minister of State

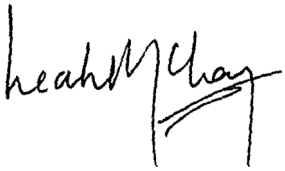
This annual report will be presented to Parliament to meet the statutory reporting requirements of *Public Sector Act 2009*, *Public Sector Regulations 2010* and *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987* and the requirements of Premier and Cabinet Circular PC013 Annual Reporting.

This report is verified to be accurate for the purposes of annual reporting to the Parliament of South Australia.

Submitted on behalf of the Electoral Commission of South Australia by:

Leah McLay

Electoral Commissioner (Acting)



30 September 2026

From the Acting Electoral Commissioner



I am pleased to present the Electoral Commission of South Australia's 2025-26 Annual Report, which outlines ECSA's performance, operations and achievements for the year ended 30 June 2026.

It reflects a challenging year in which the Commission's operations were tested through implementation of legislative change, election delivery and leadership transition.

ECSA conducted the 2026 South Australian State Election in March and, for the first time, concurrently delivered the First Nations Voice to Parliament election. There were 15 local government supplementary elections, three recounts and we delivered electoral roll services, regulatory compliance activities, public education, research and planning for future electoral events.

Concurrent system implementation and election delivery placed pressure on planning, training, staffing and service delivery. Some aspects of our operations did not meet our expectations and ECSA will use the lessons of 2025-26 to support constructive change.

As Acting Commissioner since 6 April 2026, I welcome the independent external review undertaken by former Australian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Tom Rogers AO, and I look forward to receiving his findings.

In light of the challenges ECSA faced at the State Election, and in expectation of recommendations from the independent review, I requested a delay to the Periodic Local Government Elections.

I am pleased that my request was supported by the Special Minister of State and the South Australian Parliament and ECSA is now focused on delivering the elections in April 2027.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the enormous contribution of ECSA staff, returning officers, polling officials and other temporary election workers. I apologise for the operational challenges that affected them, and some members of the public, during the election period.

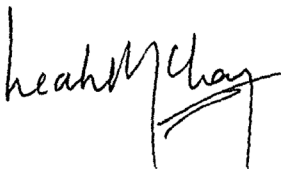
My thanks also extend to our delivery partners, government agencies, councils, community organisations, suppliers and stakeholders. Hard work and dedication to electoral service delivery in a demanding year has provided a strong foundation for future elections.

Finally, I recognise the significant contribution of Mick Sherry, who served as Electoral Commissioner from 2017, and I wish him well for the future.

At a time when democracy and trust in institutions is under pressure globally, ECSA's role has never been more important. The more contested the broader environment becomes, the more important it is to have strong, impartial and trustworthy institutions.

Our values of independence, integrity and professionalism will continue to guide how we plan, make decisions, deliver services and engage with the community. They remain central to strengthening accessibility, responsiveness and public confidence in South Australia's democratic processes.

Integrity is easy to claim when things are going well but its real value becomes apparent when an organisation faces challenges. I am grateful for the opportunity to lead ECSA through a time of great challenges and tremendous possibilities and I thank the whole ECSA team for its support in approaching both together.



Electoral Commissioner (Acting)

Electoral Commission of South Australia

Contents

Overview: about the agency 6

Our strategic focus 6
Our organisational structure 7
Changes to the agency 7
Our minister 7
Our executive team 7
Legislation administered by the agency 8
Other related agencies (within the minister's area of responsibility) 8

The agency's performance 9

Performance at a glance 9
Agency specific objectives and performance 9
Corporate performance summary 11
Agency performance management and development systems 11
Work health, safety and return to work programs 11
Executive employment in the agency 13

Financial performance 14

Financial performance at a glance 14
Consultants' disclosure 15
Contractors' disclosure 15

Risk management 17

Risk and audit at a glance 17
Fraud detected in the agency 17
Strategies implemented to control and prevent fraud 17
Public interest disclosure 17

Reporting required under any other act or regulation 18

Reporting required under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007* 18

Public complaints 18

Number of public complaints reported 18
Additional metrics 19
Service improvements 20
Compliance statement 20

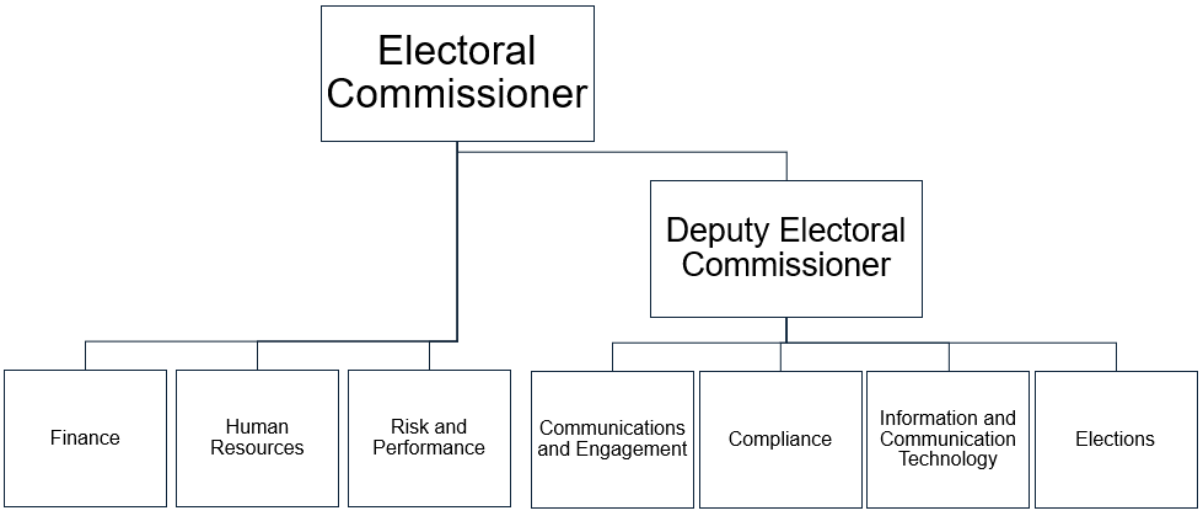
Appendix: Audited financial statements 2025-26 21

Overview: about the agency

Our strategic focus

Our purpose	To deliver high quality, inclusive electoral services that uphold public trust and participation.
Our vision	Public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.
Our values	**Independence** We operate free from external influence, maintaining impartiality and objectivity in all aspects of our work. Our independence ensures that electoral processes are fair, credible, and aligned with democratic principles. **Integrity** We uphold the highest standards of honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct. Our decisions and actions are guided by a commitment to doing what is right, ensuring our processes and outcomes are trustworthy. **Professionalism** We demonstrate respect, service, and accountability at all times.
Our functions, objectives and deliverables	Our three strategic goals are: 1. Elections delivered with integrity. 2. Public awareness of and trust in electoral services. 3. Trusted and future-ready organisation.

Our organisational structure



Changes to the agency

During 2025-26 there were no changes to the agency's structure and objectives as a result of internal reviews or machinery of government changes.

The role of Commissioner has been held in an Acting capacity by Deputy Commissioner Leah McLay since 6 April 2026 and the role of Deputy Commissioner has been vacant during that time.

Our minister

Hon Kyam Maher MLC is the Deputy Premier, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Arts and Special Minister of State.

The Special Minister of State is the Minister responsible for the *Electoral Act 1985*.

Our executive team

Mick Sherry
Electoral Commissioner
Appointed on 20 February 2017

Leah McLay
Deputy Electoral Commissioner
Appointed on 15 January 2026
(Acting Commissioner from 6 April 2026)

Legislation administered by the agency

The Electoral Commissioner is responsible for the administration of the *Electoral Act 1985* and is the appointed authority for the conduct of elections and other activities in accordance with the following legislation as at 30 June 2026:

Enabling legislation	Entity	Members Elected	Term	Due
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Council	14	3 years	Aug 2027
Architectural Practice Act 2009	Architectural Practice Board of South Australia	3	3 years	Feb 2029
City of Adelaide Act 1998	City of Adelaide	1 Lord Mayor 11 Councillors	4 years	April 2027
Electoral Act 1985	State of South Australia	47 HA 11 LC	4 years	Mar 2030
First Nations Voice Act 2023	First Nations Voice to South Australian Parliament	12	4 years	Mar 2030
Local Government (Elections) Act 1999	All other councils (excl Roxby Downs)	52 Mayors 619 Councillors	4 years	April 2027
South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Act 1992	South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board	3	4 years	Jul 2028
Superannuation Act 1988; Superannuation Regulations 2001	Superannuation Board	2	3 years	Sep 2027
Superannuation Funds Management Corporation of SA Act 1995; Superannuation Funds Management Corporation of SA Regulations 1995	South Australian Superannuation Funds Management Corporation	1	3 years	Sep 2027

HA = House of Assembly / LC = Legislative Council

Other related agencies (within the minister's area of responsibility)

No other related agencies within the Minister's area of responsibility.

The agency's performance

Performance at a glance

Key outcomes for ECSA in 2025-26 were:

- conduct of elections for representatives to sit in the Parliament of South Australia;
- conduct of elections for members of the First Nations Voice to Parliament, local government authorities and other organisations;
- implementation of the *Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024;*
- implementation of the *Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Act 2024;*
- administration, monitoring and reporting on requirements of the *Electoral Act 1985*, including donations and campaign expenditure, public funding and special assistance funding claims;
- provision of electoral education and information and conduct of research and evaluation into electoral matters;
- administration of the public funding for election campaigns for registered political parties and candidates;
- reimbursements of administrative expenditure incurred by registered political parties;
- research and evaluation of electoral matters;
- provision of electoral roll products and maps; and
- support for parliamentary electoral district boundary and council boundary representation reviews.

Agency specific objectives and performance

Agency Objective One Elections delivered with integrity
Indicators • Electoral events delivered in accordance with legislative requirements. • Unscheduled election events conducted effectively and efficiently.
Performance • Zero election results challenged in the Court of Disputed Returns. • 0.1% between initial results and required recounts. • 98% of parliamentary elections declared within 18 days of poll closure. • 15 supplementary local government elections and three recounts conducted in accordance with legislative obligations. • All 46 vacant positions filled for The First Nations Voice to Parliament. • 100% rolls provided to Councils within five days of roll closure.

Agency Objective Two

Public Awareness of and trust in electoral services

Indicators

- Improved levels of voter participation, particularly from communities and sectors with lower participation.
- High levels of awareness and understanding of election advertising and promotion campaign.
- Decreased levels of informal votes.

Performance

- 27.5% increase in First Nations Voice to Parliament votes from 2,748 in 2024 to 3,504 in 2026.
- 88.8 % participation rates for the State Election.

Agency Objective Three

Trusted and future-ready organisation

Indicators

- Modernisation of election management systems.
- Introduction of a workforce fatigue management plan for the State Election.
- Implementation of the *Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024.*
- Implementation of the Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Act.
- Development and implementation of a communication and engagement plan for the state election.

Performance

- Phase One of the Election Management System implemented.
- *Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Act 2024* requirements implemented.
- *Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024* implemented.
- Communication and Engagement Plan for the State Election developed and implemented.
- Fatigue Management Plan developed and introduced.

Corporate performance summary

Agency performance management and development systems

Performance management and development system	Performance
ECSA's Performance Management and Development Program is an ongoing process of formal and informal discussions with each public sector employee	Public sector employees participated in mid-year (to 31 December 2025) and end of year (to 30 June 2026) performance feedback processes. These processes encompassed face to face meetings, confirmation of areas of focus and their alignment to strategic priorities and corporate plan objectives, identification of future training and development needs and documented performance feedback.
Training plans	Corporate training for all ECSA employees was delivered on anti-bullying and anti-harassment, and autism awareness and understanding. In addition, relevant staff undertook training in de-escalation, cultural awareness, first aid and mental health first aid.
Development opportunities	The delivery of the 2026 State election provided employees with the opportunity to be responsible for election projects, functional streams of work and/or key aspects of election delivery.

Work health, safety and return to work programs

Program name	Performance
Safety and wellbeing are part of the induction process	All new employees received a structured briefing from a Health and Safety Representative covering work health and safety (WHS) processes and procedures during their induction.
WHS Committee established under section 75 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*	The WHS Committee met every 2-3 months and provided an avenue for consultation between management, Health and Safety Representatives, Wardens, First Aid Officers, and staff regarding WHS matters.

Program name	Performance
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	The EAP provides confidential counselling and support from professionally qualified psychologists and counsellors to all employees and immediate family members for issues that are impact on their wellbeing. In 2025-26, ECSA engaged an additional EAP and Critical Incident Response provider to ensure there is sufficient coverage and options available when these services are needed.
Mentally Healthy Workplace Consultative Committee (MHWCC)	ECSA has a MHWCC to implement the Mentally Healthy Workplace Strategy and Action Plan.

Workplace injury claims	Current year 2025-26	Past year 2024-25	% change (+ / -)
Total new workplace injury claims	3	1	300%
Fatalities	0	0	0%
Seriously injured workers*	0	0	0%
Significant injuries (where lost time exceeds a working week, expressed as frequency rate per 1000 FTE)	1	1	0%

** Number of claimants assessed during the reporting period as having a whole person impairment meeting the relevant threshold under the Return to Work Act 2014 (Part 2 Division 5)*

Work health and safety regulations	Current year 2025-26	Past year 2024-25	% change (+ / -)
Number of notifiable incidents (*Work Health and Safety Act 2012, Part 3)*	0	1	-100%
Number of provisional improvement, improvement and prohibition notices (*Work Health and Safety Act 2012 Sections 90, 191 and 195*)	0	0	0%

Return to work costs**	Current year 2025-26	Past year 2024-25	% change (+ / -)
Total gross workers compensation expenditure ($)	$19,185	$50,787	-62%
Income support payments – gross ($)	$4,846	$102,866	-95%

*** Before third-party recovery*

Data for previous years is available at https://www.ecsa.gov.au from previous Annual reports and other corporate publications - Electoral Commission SA.

Executive employment in the agency

Executive classification	Number of executives
Electoral Commissioner (ELECCM)	1
Deputy Electoral Commissioner (ELEDCM)	1

Data for previous years is available at: https://ecsa.sa.gov.au/ from previous Annual Reports.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment has a workforce information page that provides further information on the breakdown of executive gender, salary and tenure by agency.

Financial performance

Financial performance at a glance

The following is a brief summary of the overall financial position of the agency. The information is unaudited. Full audited financial statements are attached to this report.

Statement of comprehensive income	2025-26 Budget $000s	2025-26 Actual $000s	Variation $000s	Past year 2024-25 Actual $000s
Total income	45,378	54,535	9,157	14,492
Total expenses	43,412	46,921	3,509	11,185
Net result	**1,966**	**7,614**	**5,648**	**3,307**
Total comprehensive result	**1,966**	**7,614**	**5,648**	**3,307**

Statement of financial position	2025-26 Budget $000s	2025-26 Actual $000s	Variation $000s	Past year 2024-25 Actual $000s
Current assets	3,674	12,355	8,681	6,869
Non-current assets	6,703	10,143	3,440	1,905
Total assets	**10,377**	**22,498**	**12,121**	**8,774**
Current liabilities	1,398	6,945	5,547	924
Non-current liabilities	795	701	(94)	612
Total liabilities	**2,193**	**7,646**	**5,453**	**1,536**
Net assets	**8,184**	**14,852**	**6,668**	**7,238**
Equity	**8,184**	**14,852**	**6,668**	**7,238**

Consultants' disclosure

The following is a summary of external consultants that have been engaged by the agency, the nature of work undertaken, and the actual payments made for the work undertaken during the financial year.

Consultancies with a contract value below $10,000 each

Consultancies	Purpose	Actual payment (GST exclusive)
All consultancies below $10,000 each (combined)	Independent functional review of ECSA's finance function	$ 8,738

Consultancies with a contract value above $10,000 each

Consultancies	Purpose	Actual payment (GST exclusive)
Chilli Services Pty Ltd	Senate Court System Support Services 2025-26	$ 48,731
Good Government Advisory	Independent facilitation services	$ 28,000
	Total	**$ 76,731**

Data for previous years is available at https://www.ecsa.gov.au from previous Annual reports and other corporate publications - Electoral Commission SA.

See also the Consolidated Financial Report of the Department of Treasury and Finance published at the end of each calendar year for the total value of consultancy contracts across the South Australian public sector.

Contractors' disclosure

The following is a summary of external contractors that have been engaged by the agency, the nature of work undertaken, and the actual payments made for work undertaken during the financial year.

Contractors with a contract value below $10,000

Contractors	Purpose	Actual payment (GST exclusive)
All contractors below $10,000 each (combined)	Various	$ Nil

Contractors with a contract value above $10,000 each

Contractors	Purpose	Actual payment (GST exclusive)
Ian Clayfield	Provision of accounting services	$ 85,256
	Total	**$ 85,256**

Data for previous years is available at https://www.ecsa.gov.au from previous Annual reports and other corporate publications - Electoral Commission SA.

The SA Tenders and Contracts website displays details of Government of South Australia-awarded contracts for goods, services and works and across government contracts.

Risk management

Risk and audit at a glance

The independent Risk and Performance Committee advises and reports to the Electoral Commissioner on risk, controls and performance of ECSA. The Committee meets quarterly and has developed a work program that considers the following areas in accordance with its Terms of Reference:

- Agency performance
- Strategy
- Operations
- Financial management, including procurement and contract management
- People and culture
- Compliance and accountability
- Customer complaints
- Service delivery
- ICT services, including cyber security and system development

The Risk and Performance Committee reviews new and updated policies and provides advice accordingly.

Fraud detected in the agency

There were no instances of fraud reported or detected in the agency during the year.

Strategies implemented to control and prevent fraud

ECSA is committed to the prevention, detection and reporting of fraud, corruption, misconduct and other improper conduct.

ECSA has adopted the South Australian Public Sector Fraud and Corruption Control Policy issued by the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment and applies its requirements and principles across the organisation. Employees are expected to act in accordance with the policy and are required to report any suspected fraud, corruption or other improper conduct.

Any allegations or suspected instances of fraud or corruption are managed in accordance with the policy and relevant legislative and reporting requirements, including escalation to the Electoral Commissioner.

ECSA maintains governance, risk management and internal control arrangements designed to support the prevention, detection and management of fraud and corruption risks.

Data for previous years is available at: www.ecsa.sa.gov.au from previous Annual Reports.

Public interest disclosure

Number of occasions on which public interest information has been disclosed to a responsible officer of the agency under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018:*

0.

Data for previous years is available at: http://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au/ from previous Annual Reports

Reporting required under any other act or regulation

Nil to report.

Reporting required under the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007*

During 2025-26, ECSA incorporated Climate Ready Government considerations into its strategic planning framework. Climate-ready government initiatives are reflected in the ECSA's Strategic Plan 2025-28, including consideration of climate-related sustainability in corporate planning and policy development. Further work to integrate climate-related risk and sustainability considerations into organisational planning and governance processes will continue in future reporting periods.

Public complaints

Number of public complaints reported

ECSA received a total of 455 services complaints between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026 relating to the 2026 State Election, 2026 Voice Election, 2025 Local Government Supplementary Elections and the 2024 Black By-Election.

On 28 April 2026, the State Government announced former Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers AO had been appointment to lead a comprehensive review into the management and oversight of the 2026 State Election and 2026 First Nations Voice to Parliament Election.

Public submissions to the independent external review were sought and work on the independent external review progressed with ECSA's support.

Number of service complaints reported			
Complaint categories	**Sub-categories**	**Description**	**Number of complaints 2025–26**
Professional behaviour	Staff conduct and behaviour	Concerns about the conduct of ECSA staff or election officials acting in a staff role	17
Communication	Communication quality	Inadequate, delayed or absent communication with customer	28
Service delivery	Access to services / process	Service access, voting or operational delivery issues	306
Service delivery	Systems/technology	System unavailable, inaccessible, incorrect result or poor system design	9

Number of service complaints reported			
Complaint categories	**Sub-categories**	**Description**	**Number of complaints 2025–26**
Employment	Employment	Employment, recruitment, payroll or remuneration matters	65
Policy	Policy application / content	Policy application, clarity or perceived disadvantage	15
Service quality	Information, access, timeliness, safety, responsiveness	Quality, accessibility, timeliness or responsiveness of service	15
Total			**455**

Additional metrics	**Total**
Number of positive feedback comments	11
Number of negative feedback comments (as above)	455
Total number of feedback comments	466
% complaints resolved within policy timeframes	97.9%

ECSA received 404 complaints alleging breaches of electoral legislation by third parties, as follows:

Possible Legislative breach by a third party	**Electoral Act**	**First Nations Voice to Parliament**	**Local Government**	**Overall**
Total complaints	345	3	56	404
Acknowledged within 2 business days	93.0%	100%	96.4%	93.6%
Resolved within 5 business days after acknowledgement	89.8%	100%	58.2%	85.5%
Positive feedback comments				11

Data for previous years is available at https://www.ecsa.gov.au from previous Annual reports and other corporate publications - Electoral Commission SA.

Service improvements

Following a review of complaints arising from the 2022 Local Government and State Elections, a Complaints Management Framework was approved in December 2025.

The review recommended: clearer service standards and escalation triggers; a single online entry point; risk-based triage prioritising matters affecting election integrity or outcome; standard assessment templates; election-period surge staffing; automated tracking and reminders; and consistent data controls. Business improvements were commenced before the 2026 State Election.

As stated above, the independent external review, led by Mr Tom Rogers AO, which was launched following the State Election, will examine the management and oversight of the State Election and First Nations Voice to Parliament Election.

Compliance statement

ECSA is compliant with Premier and Cabinet Circular 039 (PC039) Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector	Yes
ECSA has communicated the content of PC039 and the agency's related complaints policies and procedures to employees	Yes

Appendix: Audited financial statements 2025-26