



FREE TIME ELECTION BROADCASTS

2021 Edition

Production Guidelines

Note: These Production Guidelines apply to all Federal, State & Territory Elections. The ABC may revise these election production guidelines from time to time, at the ABC's sole discretion.

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Free Time Election Broadcasts

PRODUCTION GUIDELINES FOR FEDERAL, STATE & TERRITORY ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the ABC's production guidelines for party broadcasts during election campaigns, including our technical and other requirements.

These guidelines have been drafted in accordance with the [ABC Act](#), our [Editorial Policies](#) and the [policy statement of the ABC Board](#).

FORM AND PRESENTATION OF YOUR BROADCAST

Guiding principles and obligations

The ABC is obliged to ensure that:

- the ABC acts in accordance with principles of fairness and objectivity in our election coverage;
- the national broadcasting service is not used as a medium for personal attack, as distinguished from criticism of a party and its policies;
- the ABC does not broadcast material which, in the opinion of the ABC, is defamatory or otherwise unlawful; and
- the ABC does not broadcast election advertisements, as distinct from broadcasts of political matters.

Subject to the matters set out above, accuracy is the responsibility of the parties making the broadcasts. The parties must use the time on ABC platforms for announcements of policy on particular issues and, for the major parties, the party's final pitch.

Material must inform and not be in the nature of an advertisement

Since the ABC is not permitted to broadcast advertisements, the material provided by each political party must be in the form of a political comment or statement only and must not be in the nature of an advertisement.

Policy announcements and final pitches must aim to inform voters about election policy matters. In determining whether material submitted for a party election broadcast is "political matter" or is an "advertisement", the ABC will take into account:

- the content; and
- the presentation of the material, including style, tone and emphasis.

Material that is in the nature of an advertisement might include: stylised images, misleading non-verbal impressions or unduly frequent or unduly prominent use of catchwords, slogans or jingles.

The ABC reserves the right at its sole discretion to refrain from broadcasting any material which it considers may constitute an advertisement.

Speakers must be candidates or sitting members

A party's policy announcements must be made by one or more speakers who are sitting members or candidates at the relevant election. (The formal introductory and closing announcements may be in a different voice but must be identified.)

A party's final pitch must be made predominantly by the leadership team, but other speakers may be used provided they are candidates or sitting members.

News and current affairs style interviews

News and current affairs style interview presentations will not be permitted where this may create a misleading impression that the interview is being carried out by the ABC or using a style associated with ABC news and current affairs programs.

Use of graphics etc.

Use of graphics or vision to illustrate key points is permitted provided they are informative and not accompanied by sound effects or other characteristics of advertising. Where a party proposes to include a drawing or illustration of an identifiable person who is not the party's candidate, that person's permission must be obtained and evidenced to the satisfaction of the ABC as and when required—see "Participants' consent" below.

Use of music

Use of music is permitted provided it is non-intrusive background music only and does not include lyrics, prominent musical stings or any other intrusive elements which drive the narrative of the announcement.

Telephone numbers, website addresses etc.

Telephone or text numbers, email addresses and references to web pages or other services must not be included in announcements or final pitches.

CONSENTS AND CLEARANCES

Indemnity

The ABC requires that each political party executes a suitable form of release and indemnity in favour of the ABC in respect of any liability which may arise out of any such election broadcast. The ABC shall also retain the right in its absolute discretion to refrain from broadcasting or publishing online any material which it considers may be of a defamatory nature or unlawful in any other respect.

Participants' consent

Where a political party proposes to use any material in which an identifiable person appears and that person is not that party's candidate, the party must obtain permission of the person concerned and provide evidence of that permission to the ABC as and when required. If the identifiable person is a child, the child's parents or guardian's permission must be obtained.

Consent is not required for those individuals who appear in footage shot at policy launches or other events held for party supporters, in which case permission from audience members is implicit.

ABC content containing vision or sound of an identifiable person will not be released for use in political party advertisements unless that political party has obtained permission from the person concerned.

To minimise any administrative delay in material being approved for broadcast, parties should—at or prior to the time of delivery—provide an assurance to the ABC that all necessary consents have been obtained.

Copyright clearance

Where a political party proposes to use any material (such as stock photos) in which it does not own copyright, it is the responsibility of that political party to obtain copyright clearance and to ensure the use of the material in a political broadcast—including when posted online—complies with all relevant license terms and conditions set by the copyright owner.

As a general rule, the ABC does not license any of its own identifiable ABC content for use in either free time announcements or political advertising.

LENGTH OF BROADCAST – FEDERAL ELECTIONS

The duration of each broadcast includes opening and closing party identification announcements (see “Identification as a party election broadcast” below).

Government and Opposition parties

For **Federal Elections**, the ABC has determined that Government and Opposition parties will each be granted approximately 25 minutes 30 seconds of free time on ABC1 Television and on ABC Local Radio:

	ABC Local Radio	ABC Television
Policy announcements	(12 x 56 seconds*)	(12 x 60 seconds)
Final pitch	13 minutes 26 seconds*	13 minutes 30 seconds

*For technical reasons, policy announcements on Radio must not exceed 56 seconds, and final pitches on Radio must not exceed 13 minutes 26 seconds. Note that if the audio from a television broadcast is to be used in the party’s radio broadcast, editing may be required to meet this technical requirement and to allow time for the closer to include identifying the name of the person doing the voiceover.

Minor and new parties

If a minor or new party meets the minimum eligibility criteria for free broadcast time, then the party may be granted time on ABC1 Television and on ABC Local Radio for broadcasting policy announcements:

	ABC Local Radio	ABC Television
Initial allocation	2 x 56 seconds**	2 x 60 seconds
Further allocation	2 x 56 seconds**	2 x 60 seconds
Additional allocation of time is at the discretion of the ABC Board		

**For technical reasons, policy announcements on Radio must not exceed 56 seconds. Note that if the audio from a television broadcast is to be used in the party’s radio broadcast, editing may be required to meet this technical requirement and to allow time for the closer to include identifying the name of the person doing the voiceover.

LENGTH OF BROADCAST – STATE AND TERRITORY ELECTIONS

The duration of each broadcast includes opening and closing party identification announcements (see “Identification as a party election broadcast” below).

Government and Opposition parties

For **State and Territory Elections**, the ABC has determined that Government and Opposition parties will each be granted approximately 18 minutes of free time on ABC1 Television and on ABC Local Radio:

	ABC Local Radio	ABC Television
Policy announcements	(8 x 56 seconds*)	(8 x 60 seconds)
Final pitch	9 minutes 56 seconds*	10 minutes

*For technical reasons, policy announcements on Radio must not exceed 56 seconds, and final pitches on Radio must not exceed 9 minutes 56 seconds. Note that if the audio from a television broadcast is to be used in the party’s radio broadcast, editing may be required to meet this technical requirement and to allow time for the closer to include identifying the name of the person doing the voiceover.

Minor and new parties

If a minor or new party meets the minimum eligibility criteria for free broadcast time, then the party may be granted time on ABC1 Television and on ABC Local Radio for broadcasting policy announcements:

	ABC Local Radio	ABC Television
Initial allocation	2 x 56 seconds**	2 x 60 seconds
Further allocation	2 x 56 seconds**	2 x 60 seconds
Additional allocation of time is at the discretion of the ABC Board		

**For technical reasons, policy announcements on Radio must not exceed 56 seconds. Note that if the audio from a television broadcast is to be used in the party’s radio broadcast, editing may be required to meet this technical requirement and to allow time for the closer to include identifying the name of the person doing the voiceover.

SCHEDULING AND TRANSMISSION OF BROADCASTS

Transmission on ABC Television and ABC Local Radio

Party election broadcasts will be scheduled on the ABC Television main channel and on ABC Local Radio.

Publication on ABC Online

Following or at the same time as broadcast on television or radio, the ABC may, at its discretion, post on ABC Online the video or audio of any party election broadcast.

Any party election broadcast material posted online by the ABC will be presented in such a manner as to preserve the independence and integrity of the ABC.

The ABC reserves the right to remove any such party election broadcast material.

The broadcast schedule

The ABC will prepare a schedule of available time-slots for policy announcements. The schedule will not be varied where a party fails to provide its material in time to fill its scheduled spots. The allocation of schedule times among the parties will be determined randomly and in a transparent manner at a meeting of Party representatives and the ABC.

Final pitches will be broadcast during the final week of the election period. The ABC follows, as a matter of policy, the “election blackout” period which runs from midnight on the Wednesday before polling day.

Broadcast times may be altered at the ABC’s discretion.

Parties may elect to waive or reduce their time

A party may elect to waive its final pitch broadcast or any of its 60-second announcement broadcasts but cannot convert the final pitch broadcast into extra 60-second announcements. Parties will not be permitted to divide up or combine their allocations, for example to make one 60-second spot into two 30-second spots, or to make two 60-second spots into a 2-minute spot. Any decision not to proceed with a broadcast, or to submit material that will run significantly less than the allocated time, must be notified to the ABC in advance. This is to ensure that the ABC can deal appropriately with the scheduling and/or technical consequences of such a decision.

Repeat broadcasts

A party may choose to repeat a previously approved announcement if it misses a deadline or otherwise wishes to repeat. Where material is to be repeated, the party should advise the ABC of this no later than 9.30 am (AEST) on the day before scheduled transmission.

IDENTIFICATION AS A PARTY ELECTION BROADCAST

The **party** must include the following Opener and Closer as part of its policy announcements and final pitch. Announcements with incomplete or missing openers or closers will not be broadcast.

Radio openers and closers

The **Radio Opener** must state that the broadcast is by a named person or persons speaking on behalf of the party for the coming election. To illustrate:

RADIO OPENER:

“Here is a broadcast by [Name of candidate/s who speak] for the [Name of party] for the (Name of election) Election.”

The **Radio Closer** must announce the name of the natural person authorising the broadcast for the party, the name of the party, the town/city/suburb where the party’s principal office is situated, the names of the candidate/s speaking and the name of the person voicing the opening and closing announcements. To illustrate:

RADIO CLOSER:

“Authorised by [Name of party official authorising] for the [Name of party], [Town/city/suburb where party’s principal office is situated].

Spoken by [Name of candidate/s who speak and name of the person who does the voiceover].”

All names identified in the Opener and Closer must be clearly audible to the average listener. If a party intends to use the audio from its television broadcast as its radio broadcast, editing may be required to ensure all names in the closer are clearly audible. Note that, in contrast to television broadcasts, radio closers have to include an additional name (that of the person doing the voiceover) and, for technical reasons, radio broadcasts are reduced by 4 seconds (see the “Length of Broadcast” section).

TV openers and closers

The **TV Opener** must include an image of the party’s identification logo or graphic and be accompanied by a voiceover that states the broadcast is by a named person or persons speaking on behalf of the party for the coming election. To illustrate:

TV OPENER:

Voiceover says, **“Here is a broadcast by [Name of candidate/s who speak] for the [Name of party] for the (name of election) Election.”**

Show on-screen image of party logo/graphic.

The **TV Closer** must include a voiceover that announces the name of the natural person authorising the broadcast for the party, the name of the party, and the town/city/suburb where the party’s principal office is situated. This must be accompanied by text on-screen conveying the same information, as well as the names of the candidate/s speaking and the name of the person voicing the opening and closing announcements. To illustrate:

TV CLOSER:

Voiceover says, **“Authorised by [Name of party official authorising] for the [Name of party], [Town/city/suburb where party’s principal office is situated].”**

Show on-screen the text:

Authorised by [Name of party official authorising] for the [Name of party], [Town/city/suburb where party’s principal office is situated].

Spoken by [Name of candidate/s who speak and name of the person who does the voiceover].

Allowing for on-screen crawls in TV broadcasts

The **ABC** will insert into a party’s final pitch and policy announcements an on-screen crawl stating:

“This is an election broadcast for the <Party Name>”.

In the 60-second policy announcements, the crawl will run once at approximately 30 seconds into the announcement.

Federal Elections: In the major parties’ final pitch, the crawl will run two times: at approximately 3 minutes and at 6 minutes into the pitch.

State & Territory Elections: In the major parties’ final pitch, the crawl will run three times: at approximately 3 minutes, at 6 minutes, and at 10 minutes into the pitch.

Delivery deadlines

All recordings for television and radio must be available at the ABC for checking no later than 9.30 am (AEST) on the day before scheduled transmission. Where announcements are scheduled for Saturdays, Sundays or Mondays, recordings must be available to the ABC by 9.30 am (AEST) on the preceding Friday.