

Election Signs: State and Federal Government Elections

**Guidelines and General
Approval for placement or
affixation of election signs**

February 2022

The Guidelines were first issued in 2009 and have been revised or updated:

- *July 2010 – following Ministerial advice concerning infrastructure on a road*
- *July 2013 – minor machinery changes and renewal of agreements with Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure and S A Power Networks.*
- *July 2014 - the Guidelines were substantially revised to include the General Approval*
- *July 2017 – amendment to section 226(3)(c).*
- *August 2017 – changes arising from section 23 of the Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016 and section 226(3) of the Local Government Act 1999.*
- *February 2022 – general update and creation of a separate Guideline for Local Government election signs.*

The Election Signs: State and Federal Government Elections – Guidelines and General Approval has been prepared by the Local Government Association of SA (LGA) in consultation with ECSA, DIT and SA Power Networks for the guidance of and use by member Councils. The LGA is the statutory peak body for Local Government in South Australia, representing all 68 Councils in the State.

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Contents

General approval to place election signs on roads and road infrastructure	1
Objectives & Scope	1
The lawful display of signs & the operation of the guidelines	2
The General Approval for display of signs on road infrastructure.....	2
SA Power Networks poles and columns.....	5
Council owned land / private land.....	5
Illegal signs.....	5
<i>Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016 - penalties</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Removal and disposal of election signs</i>	<i>6</i>
Annexure A.....	7
Dictionary.....	7

General approval to place election signs on roads and road infrastructure

These Guidelines operate to provide a **General Approval** to authorise the placement or affixation of moveable signs, advertising candidates for election to **State or Federal Government**, on a road or onto infrastructure on a road owned by the Relevant Authorities. Provided that the requirements of these Guidelines are fully complied with, it is not necessary to make application to the Council or the Relevant Authorities for permission to display moveable election signs in this manner.¹

For guidelines relating to placement of electoral advertising posters in **Local Government elections**, please refer to the separate guideline: *Election Signs: Local Government Elections*.

Objectives & Scope

SA Power Networks (SAPN) and the Department for Infrastructure (DIT) (the Relevant Authorities) own the relevant infrastructure installed on roads (i.e., light poles, stobie poles). This means that the permission of the Relevant Authorities is required to display any moveable sign on their infrastructure.

The Relevant Authorities have, by way of adopting Instruments of General Approval, determined to grant their permission for moveable signs to be affixed to their infrastructure subject to various conditions. The Relevant Authorities have authorised SA Councils to regulate the display of moveable signs on their infrastructure (including by way of enforcing compliance with these conditions).

The objectives of these Guidelines are to:

- provide clarity regarding the legal position with respect to the placement of election signs on roads and road-related infrastructure in the Council's area and to provide a General Approval for the placement of election signs on roads and road infrastructure during a **State or Federal Government** election period, provided the signs comply fully with all conditions set out in the Guideline and General Approval; and
- establish, with the relevant consents of SAPN and Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DIT) conditions of General Approval for the display of such election signs on infrastructure on a road (provided that the conditions are fully met); and
- ensure a consistent and equitable approach to the management of election signs for all parties and candidates in a State or Federal Government election irrespective of political persuasion or other platform; and
- minimise any threat to public safety from the placement of the election signs.

¹ All fixtures and equipment installed in, on, across, under or over a public road by the provider of public infrastructure are owned by the provider of that infrastructure, not by the Council (section 209(1) of the *Local Government Act 1999*).

The lawful display of signs & the operation of the guidelines

A **moveable sign** may be placed on a road at any time without the permission of the council provided that it complies with the council's by-laws².

Signs, such as corflutes, that are advertising candidates for election and which do not comply with council's by-laws, may be placed on a road **without** seeking the Council's permission provided that:

- *the sign is related to a State or Commonwealth election and is displayed during the period commencing at 5pm on the day before the day of the issue of the writ or writs for the election and ending at the close of polls on polling day³; and*

the moveable sign does not unreasonably:

- restrict the use of the road; or
- endanger the safety of members of the public.⁴

If a moveable sign displayed on a road does not satisfy the above requirements, then:

- permission is not granted by the Council to display the moveable sign; and
- an authorised person of the Council may order the owner to remove the sign, or if the owner is unknown or fails to comply immediately with the order, may remove and dispose of the sign.

An election sign **cannot** lawfully be placed on, or affixed to, infrastructure on a road without the permission of the owner of that infrastructure.

In general terms, a person does not have the right to interfere with another person's property. This extends to a person interfering with infrastructure (i.e., such as by affixing an election sign to it) that is owned by another person.

The general approval for display of signs on road infrastructure

This **General Approval** is given for election signs to be posted, affixed to, or erected on infrastructure that is owned by SAPN or DIT and installed on a road owned by the Relevant Authorities, subject to compliance with the following conditions:

Election signs must:

1. be no more than 1 square metre in area. A back-to-back sign facing two directions is considered to be one sign for this purpose.
Note: Places designated as polling booths/places for Federal and State Elections and Referenda will not be subject to this requirement on polling day only.
2. only be displayed, in the case of State and Commonwealth elections, during the period commencing at 5pm on the day before the day of the issue of the writ or writs for the election and ending at the close of polls on polling day (the election period). Should the election

² Section 226(1), *Local Government Act 1999*

³ Section 226(3)(c), *Local Government Act 1999*

⁴ Section 227(1)(d), *Local Government Act 1999*

signs not be removed within two days (48 hours) of the close of voting they will be considered illegal signs/posters and penalties may apply.

3. comply with all legislative requirements relating to the publication of 'electoral material' as defined in relevant legislation.
4. be securely fixed or posted and maintained in good repair and condition at all times.
5. be designed, made, and presented in a quality manner (the intent is that signs must not tear apart and become a danger to road users and end up as litter).
6. contain clear and legible writing or symbols. An authorised officer will determine whether a sign is clear and legible for these purposes.
7. contain on the face of the sign the name and address of both the person authorising the promotional material (the publisher) and the printer of it.
8. be fastened securely so that they cannot become detached in high winds and endanger Council, SAPN or DIT property or equipment or pose a danger to the public.
9. be installed, maintained, and removed in a safe manner without endangering personal and community safety.

Election Signs must not:

1. be illuminated (internally or indirectly), move, flash, rotate, or reflect so as to be an undue distraction to drivers.
2. be self-adhesive. All individual promotional material affixed under the terms of this General Approval may only be affixed by non-invasive means that do not cause damage of any type to the structure to which the material is affixed. If a paste is to be used, it must be of a water based/wallpaper type (or similar).
3. be affixed under any circumstances to trees, shrubs, or other plants or at any location that may cause physical damage to Council, SAPN or DIT property.
4. be placed on a carriageway, dividing strip (median), traffic island, roundabout, or within 50 metres of a signalised intersection, level crossing, roundabout or pedestrian activated crossing, or on the South-Eastern Freeway, the Southern Expressway, the Port River Expressway, the North-South Motorway (Superway) or the Northern Expressway.
5. be placed within 6 metres of an intersection or junction, or in any other location that may pose a hazard to pedestrians or road users.
6. be attached to any traffic control device, street name, traffic direction or parking sign or to the associated pole.
7. be erected on poles or towers carrying electricity transmission lines (these are generally lines utilising greater span lengths with significantly taller poles or towers supporting electrical wires).
8. be attached to SAPN pad-mounted transformers or switching cubicles.
9. be attached to the fences of any fenced SAPN equipment including substations, transformer stations and regulator stations.

10. be placed so as to cover any Council, SAPN or DIT numbering, signs, or other markings.
11. be placed on DIT structures with the exception of “gooseneck” light poles belonging to DIT. Structures which belong to DIT, include road bridges on arterial roads, traffic control boxes, traffic signal poles, signal boxes, traffic signs, directional and information signs, and other traffic control devices, guideposts, traffic barriers and pedestrian fences located within the road reserve.
12. be placed in a location on a pole or fence so as to aid the climbing of the pole or fence.
13. be placed so as to restrict the sight distance for road users and pedestrians crossing the road.
14. compete with or reduce the effectiveness of other signs and traffic control devices.
15. resemble a traffic control device, or reasonably be capable of being mistaken as a traffic control device (e.g., must not be affixed on the diagonal).
16. advertise any organisation other than a registered political party or candidate.

Where signs are fixed or posted on poles adjacent to footpaths or roadways such signs:

- must not be lower than 2 metres; and
- must be a maximum height of 3 metres from the ground

with nothing above the sign to affix it or anything else to the pole. Signs must have a minimum clearance of 3 metres from any overhead mains.

There is a total prohibition on any part of the sign being higher than 3 metres from the ground.

The person (including as necessary, the relevant political party) responsible for the sign must maintain the sign. The person or political party is also responsible for ensuring that safety is maintained (and the Australian Road Rules complied with) whilst the sign is being installed, maintained, or removed and no traffic disruption is to occur during the installation, maintenance, or removal process.

This General Approval **does not** extend to railway or tramline structures such as level or pedestrian crossings, bridges, stations, signalling equipment or fences adjacent to railway and tram lines. In this regard, information on the various rules and if appropriate, permission to enter or erect signs in these areas must be obtained from the relevant rail authority. In metropolitan Adelaide, this is (*in most instances*) either Adelaide Metro or the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

The person(s) responsible for the sign and/or any persons acting on their behalf, including by way of causing the sign to be displayed:

- accepts(s) that the display of the election sign must be in accordance with this General Approval and by displaying the sign, agrees to comply with the terms of this General Approval; and
- accept(s) full responsibility for any personal injury, property damage or other loss in any way arising out of or consequent upon the erection, removal, or display of signs; and

- acknowledge(s) that the Council, SA Power Networks or DIT have no liability or responsibility in relation to such matters whatsoever; and
- such person(s) agree(s) to indemnify the Council, SAPN and DIT against any such personal injury or property damage or other loss incurred by the Council, SAPN or DIT and against any third-party claims arising out of or consequent upon the erection, removal, or display of signs.

SAPN may direct the immediate removal of any signs or remove or cause to be removed any signs without notice from any poles or structures owned or managed by SAPN.

DIT may direct the immediate removal of any signs or remove or cause to be removed any signs without notice from any poles or structures owned or managed by DIT.

If SAPN or DIT removes any signs under the General Approval, SAPN and DIT may dispose of the sign as it sees fit.

The person or party responsible for the sign must remove all parts of the sign and fixtures from the site within 48 hours from the close of voting in the relevant election.

Installing, maintaining, and removing signs **must not** be carried out between 7.00am and 10.00am or between 3.00pm and 7.00pm Monday to Friday on a peak flow traffic lane.

A breach of, or non-compliance with, any of the conditions of the General Approval will invalidate the General Approval and may result in the removal of the sign.

SA Power Networks poles and columns

When installing election signs upon Stobie poles, both the method used to secure the election sign to the Stobie pole (e.g. straps or ties) and the ladder used must be non-conductive.

No ladders or operating plant are to be leant against light columns or Stobie poles during installation or removal of election signs. Ladders used must be self-supporting only.

Council owned land / private land

No election signs may be placed on Council-owned land or infrastructure or on private land or infrastructure without the permission of the Council or the private landowner, as the case may be.

Illegal signs

Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016 - penalties

Section 23 of the *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016* provides that it is an offence to 'post a bill' (erect an election sign) on property without the consent of the owner or occupier of the property. This offence applies to all election signs that are erected on roads or road infrastructure outside of the election period.

The 'consent of the owner' (i.e., SAPN, DIT or Councils), under this General Approval, is limited to the period prescribed in section 226(3) of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

Maximum penalty: \$10,000

Expiation fee: \$315⁵

If an election sign is erected outside the election period provided for in section 226(3) of the Local Government Act, a person who distributed or authorised the distribution of the bill for posting is guilty of an offence.

Maximum penalty: \$20,000 for a body corporate, \$10,000 for an individual.⁶

Removal and disposal of election signs

If the Council determines or suspects that an election sign:

- has been affixed or displayed in a manner that restricts the use of a road or endangers the safety of the public; or
- has been affixed or displayed contrary to the General Approval or otherwise without the SAPN's, DIT's or Council's consent.

Council authorised employees have authorisation to:

- Notify the organisation/persons responsible for the election sign by phone/email and request the removal of the sign within 24 hours.
- If the election sign is not removed within 24 hours, cause the offending sign to be removed. If urgent action is required to avoid a risk to public safety the Council may remove the offending election sign without first requesting its removal.
- Under section 23 of the *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016*, issue an expiation notice to any person who has erected an election sign without the permission of the owner.
- Prosecute any person who has distributed or authorised the distribution of the bill (election sign) for posting.

The Relevant Road Authority (DIT, Commissioner for Highways or Council) may remove and dispose of any sign that constitutes a hazard or does not comply with legislative requirements⁷.

⁵ Section 23(1), *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016*

⁶ Section 23(2), *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016*

⁷ Refer section 31(2), *Road Traffic Act 1961* and section 227, *Local Government Act 1999*

Annexure A

Dictionary

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

1. **Election** means any elections, referenda and/or polls as they relate to Federal, State or Local Governments.
2. **Election sign** includes a **moveable sign** as defined below and any other election sign (whether moveable or not) that is intended to affect the result of an election, referendum, or poll.
3. **General Approval** means the approval or permission of the Relevant Authority that operates these Guidelines to allow moveable signs to be affixed to infrastructure installed on a road subject to the conditions stated therein.
4. **Infrastructure** means fixtures and equipment installed on roads and includes, without limitation, poles, light poles, traffic signs, traffic lights, traffic control boxes, and other traffic control devices, transformer boxes, trees, fences, bridges, whether owned or under the care, control, or management of SAPN, DIT or the Council.
5. For the purposes of this Guideline and General Approval **moveable sign** means a moveable election advertisement, notice or election sign which is intended to affect the result of an election or poll, and which can be moved or removed without causing any damage to the infrastructure or land upon which it is placed or to which it is attached, whether free-standing or not.
6. **Pole** means a stobie pole or a light pole for the purposes of these Guidelines, whether owned or under the care, control, or management of SAPN or DIT.
7. **Relevant Authority** means SA Power Networks (SAPN) or Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) or Commissioner for Highways.
8. **Road** has the same meaning as set out in the Local Government Act – being:
a public or private street, road or thoroughfare to which public access is available on a continuous or substantially continuous basis to vehicles or pedestrians or both and includes -
 - *a bridge, viaduct or subway; or*
 - *an alley, laneway or walkway;*

and for the purposes of clarification extends from property boundary to property boundary.

Note: this definition encompasses footpath areas.

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