

RE: HPLG-MOBO-00994-2021

Dear Ms. Reilly,

I have been asked by Mr. Darragh O'Brien, T.D., Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to reply to your query in relation to postal voting.

Postal voting at elections, including bye-elections, is provided for in electoral law in respect of a number of categories of electors, including: -

- . Irish diplomats serving abroad and their spouses/civil partners,
- . whole-time members of the Defence Forces,
- . members of An Garda Síochána,
- . electors living at home who are unable to vote because of a physical illness or a physical disability,
- . certain election staff employed at the poll outside the constituency where they reside,
- . full-time students registered at their home who are living elsewhere while attending an educational institution in the State,
- . prisoners, and
- . electors whose occupation, service or employment makes it likely that they will be unable to vote in person at their local polling station on polling day.

The Programme for Government - Our Shared Future contains a commitment to establish an Electoral Commission, which will be mandated to examine the use of postal voting, with a view to expanding its provision. Any reform of electoral law in regard to postal voting will have regard to the outcome of this work.

In regard to the establishment of an Electoral Commission, the Government approved the General Scheme of an Electoral Reform Bill in December 2020, which, inter alia, provides for the establishment of the commission. The General Scheme was published in January 2021 and is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.ie%2Fen%2Fpublic%2F34cf6-general-scheme-of-the-electoral-reform-bill-2020%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cmsomers%40sdublincoco.ie%7Cf961e46d17fd4e2e8faf08d9155b4dff%7C6a3c00c019d0492da8de95fad8fda1d4%7C0%7C0%7C637564304156638381%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6I1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=hXrvUhC6fGCYn5Rr8tHnSqCWlffTCSZJKL8FzhBWO%2F8%3D&reserved=0.>

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage is currently carrying out pre-legislative scrutiny on the General Scheme.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh Redmond
Private Secretary