



Abbreviations and acronyms

AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AEM	Assistant Election Manager
AIP	Aboriginal Inclusion Plan
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCYP	Commission for Children and Young People
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COVID-19	Coronavirus
DA	Democracy Ambassador
DAIP	Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
DoT	Department of Transport
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance
DWG	Designated Work Groups
EAAG	Electoral Access Advisory Group
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EBC	Electoral Boundaries Commission
EBC Act	Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982
ECANZ	Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand
Electoral Act	Electoral Act 2002
EM	Election Manager
EMC	Electoral Matters Committee
EMG	Executive Management Group
EMS	Election Management System
EO	Election Official
ERAP	Electoral Representation Advisory Panel
ERRN	Electoral Regulation Research Network
FMCF	Financial Management Compliance Framework
FOI Act	Freedom of Information Act 1982
FRD	Financial Reporting Directions
FTE	Full time equivalent
HSR	Health and Safety Representative
HSW	Health, Safety and Wellbeing
IPAA	Institute of Public Administration Australia
IRP	Issue Resolution Procedures

JRMB	Joint Roll Management Board
JRMC	Joint Roll Management Committee
KMP	Key Management Personnel
LGA 1989	Local Government Act 1989
LGA 2020	Local Government Act 2020
LGI	Local Government Inspectorate
LSL	Long service leave
LTI	Last time injury
MIP	Multicultural Inclusion Plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OHSC	Occupational Health and Safety Committee
OHSMS	Occupational Health and Safety Management System
OVIC	Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner
PG	Planning Group
PID Act	Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012
PMC	Prime Minister and Cabinet
PMO	Project Management Office
PMS	People Matter Survey
PROV	Public Record Office of Victoria
PTD	Passport to Democracy
RMS	Roll Management System
RoU	Right of Use
RSC	Resource Smart Committee
RTW	Return to work
SEO	Senior Election Official
SLG	Senior Leadership Group
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VEC	Victorian Electoral Commission
VicSRC	Victorian Student Representative Council
VIPP	Victorian Industry Participation Policy
VPS	Victorian Public Sector
VPSC	Victorian Public Sector Commission

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Letter of transmittal

The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, Premier
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place,
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Dear Premier

In accordance with the requirements of the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Victorian Electoral Commission for the year ending 30 June 2023 for presentation to Parliament. Also included is the Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the year ending 30 June 2023.

Yours sincerely



Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) pays respect to Victoria's Traditional Owners and their elders past, present and emerging, who have been custodians of this country for many thousands of years. Their living culture and their role in the life of Victoria is acknowledged by the VEC.

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About the VEC

Our history and functions

Elections for the Victorian Parliament began when Victoria achieved independence from New South Wales in 1851. In 1910, Victoria's first Chief Electoral Inspector was appointed to head the new State Electoral Office.

The State Electoral Office existed as part of a public service department for 70 years. However, it became increasingly clear that it was inappropriate for the conduct of elections to be subject to ministerial direction. On 1 January 1989, legislation established the independent statutory office of Electoral Commissioner, who was to report to Parliament instead of a Minister. In 1995, the State Electoral Office was renamed the VEC.

The VEC's functions and operations are governed by six main pieces of legislation:

- ▶ The *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act) establishes the VEC as an independent statutory authority, sets out its functions and powers and prescribes processes for State elections.
- ▶ The *Constitution Act 1975* sets out who is entitled to enrol as an elector, who is entitled to be elected to Parliament, and the size and term of Parliament.
- ▶ The *Financial Management Act 1994* governs the way the VEC manages finances and financial reporting.
- ▶ The *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982* (EBC Act) governs the determination of State electoral boundaries. Under this legislation, the Electoral Commissioner is nominated as a member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC).
- ▶ The *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) provides for the conduct of local government elections, electoral structure and ward boundary reviews. Under this legislation the Electoral Commissioner or their representative is nominated as a member of any Electoral Representation Advisory Panel established by the Minister for Local Government.
- ▶ The *Infringements Act 2006* provides for stages two and three of compulsory voting enforcement.

Subject to these Acts, the VEC:

- ▶ maintains the Victorian register of electors
- ▶ conducts State elections, local government elections, statutory elections and polls, and fee-for-service elections
- ▶ maintains a register of political parties and administers political funding and donation disclosure laws
- ▶ provides administrative and technical support to State electoral boundary reviews and local government electoral structure reviews, and leads local government ward boundary reviews.

The VEC also has a mandated role to conduct electoral research, provide communication and education services, and inform and engage Victorians in the democratic process.

A complete list of legislation and regulations governing the VEC is included in Appendix B.

Our purpose

To deliver high-quality, accessible electoral services with innovation, integrity and independence.

Our values

Independence: acting with impartiality and integrity.

Accountability: transparent reporting and effective stewardship of resources.

Innovation: shaping our future through creativity and leadership.

Respect: consideration of self, others and the environment.

Collaboration: working as a team with partners and communities.

Our vision

All Victorians actively participating in their democracy.

Our people and partners

Creating and sustaining a work environment that supports, nurtures and inspires our people is core to the VEC's operating model. The VEC ensures that its people are engaged, capable and equipped to support democracy in Victoria.

The VEC achieves this by prioritising staff capability development to meet service delivery needs; recruiting for ability and attitude; encouraging and supporting innovation and new ways of working; and fostering concrete learning and reflective practices.

The VEC's core workforce of dedicated people is supported by a large pool of casual election officials and contractors whose contribution is essential to delivering electoral services that meet the needs of electors. Valued partnerships with suppliers also contribute greatly to the VEC's achievements.

A fundamental principle at the VEC is that our organisation is safe, diverse and inclusive and that it reflects the community we serve. The VEC achieves this through the breadth of staff we engage and by working closely with advisory and community groups. These groups comprise members of under-represented communities, including:

- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- ▶ young people
- ▶ people experiencing homelessness or in prison
- ▶ people living with disabilities
- ▶ culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The VEC acknowledges and is appreciative of the engagement from all advisory and community group members during 2022–23. The VEC thanks them for their continuing and constructive partnership.

About this report

This report provides a summary of the activities, programs and initiatives undertaken by the VEC in delivering its responsibilities and strategic plan.

This report has been published in accordance with Financial Reporting Direction (FRD) 30. As part of the VEC’s environmental sustainability activity, only the required number of reports were printed, and environmentally friendly paper and printing processes were used.

Our year 7

In this section, the incoming Electoral Commissioner Sven Bluemmel and Deputy Electoral Commissioner Dana Flemming provide a summary of the VEC’s key activities and achievements for 2022–23 and the outlook for 2023–24. The summary covers the VEC’s electoral activity including delivery of the 2022 State election, an overview of our key achievements in delivering Strategy 2023 and commentary on how the VEC is responding to a changing electoral landscape. And finally, the Commissioners reflect on the achievements of our former Electoral Commissioner, Warwick Gately AM, whose term of appointment concluded in April 2023.

Chief Financial Officer and acting Executive Director, Corporate Services, Binh Le, provides an overview of the VEC’s financial performance and acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Máiréad Doyle provides a detailed summary of the VEC’s achievements against its strategic plan.

Our commission 21

Good corporate governance and transparent reporting help ensure continued public confidence in the VEC and its processes.

This section provides detail of the VEC’s regulatory environment, governance and organisational structures, executive and management team, internal committees and external advisory groups, and the corporate systems that enable the VEC to deliver its core business and operate effectively and efficiently on a day-to-day basis.

Accountability to the Victorian public and Parliament is critical, and the VEC’s good corporate citizenship is evidenced by its performance in areas such as diversity, inclusion, accessibility, sustainability, information management and reporting.

Information relating to governing legislation, disclosure requirements and engagement with advisory groups is also detailed in this section.

Our core business 55

This section includes information about the VEC’s core business, which includes the conduct of elections, maintenance of the register of electors, ensuring fair and equitable representation for voters at State and local government levels, administering Victoria’s political funding and donation disclosure laws and increasing the awareness of, and engagement with, electoral events and matters.

Our stakeholders 95

The VEC engages with diverse stakeholders that are essential to achieving our vision. This section highlights the priority the VEC places on continually improving inclusion and participation of those historically under-represented in the electoral process as well as our engagement with electors, candidates, political parties and electoral bodies. The VEC's Diversity and Inclusion Framework is embedded in our operating model and improvement is driven through a range of organisation-wide inclusion plans. An update on all inclusion plans and community engagement work for 2022-23 is outlined.

Services to political parties and candidates are summarised, along with work undertaken with national and international electoral bodies to support innovation and electoral harmonisation.

Our people 105

The VEC's continued success depends on skilled and dedicated people with deep, specialised knowledge. To attract and retain talent, the VEC offers an empowering, engaging and inspiring place to work.

This section highlights the VEC's continued investment in building capability across the organisation and its approach to supporting our strategic plan.

Financial statements 118

The VEC is pleased to provide 'value for money' electoral services to the Victorian public. Once again, the VEC's sound and robust financial management is evidenced in this section by an unqualified report from the Auditor-General. This section also provides the VEC's audited financial statements for 2022-23.

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Our highlights



Hosting the first culturally safe mobile enrolment and voting sessions for Aboriginal organisations across Victoria



Successfully implemented the first election where the political funding and donation scheme operated in full



Hardening our ICT framework against threats by complying with all guidance in the Australian Signals Directorate 'Essential 8' best practice where technically and financially feasible



The successful delivery of the 2022 State election, during which 1,800 venues were transformed into temporary voting centres, 17,500 casual staff were trained and recruited and over 10 million ballot papers were printed and delivered across the state for a record 4.4 million Victorian voters on the electoral roll



Continuing to develop and strengthen the VEC workforce in a competitive labour market



Completion of VEC Strategy 2023 and the development of a new strategy that will guide us through to 2027

Our challenges

- ▶ Legislative and policy change, and evolving community expectations, will continue to impact the VEC's service delivery model
- ▶ The role of the VEC continues to grow due to these legislative and policy changes and must play a larger role as a regulatory and enforcement authority
- ▶ Geopolitical instability is increasing along with polarisation of political opinions, exacerbated by the rapid rise of social media and a rise in misinformation and disinformation
- ▶ Faith in democratic systems is decreasing, with the Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee identifying 'a wealth of evidence showing a worrying decline in the level of public trust'
- ▶ The growing importance of cyber security and the potential for criminals and state actors to disrupt the operation of systems and applications
- ▶ Political parties and the community expect greater use of technology to support election processes
- ▶ Attracting skilled and experienced temporary staff to support delivery of major election events in today's competitive labour market
- ▶ Sourcing accessible, convenient and well-adapted voting centres for state elections in a tight property market

Our year



Sven Bluemmel

Electoral Commissioner
(from 15 August 2023)



Dana Fleming

Deputy Electoral Commissioner
(Acting Electoral Commissioner)

As the newly appointed Electoral Commissioner, and acting Electoral Commissioner during the reporting period, we are pleased to present the annual report of the Victorian Electoral Commission for the financial year ending 30 June 2023. This report is testament to the hard work and dedication of not only our core staff, but the many thousands of Victorians that contributed to the delivery of the 2022 State election.

State election

On Saturday 26 November 2022, Victorians voted to elect our 60th state Parliament and the VEC's primary focus during the year was planning and delivering this significant event. With the shortest time between the issue and return of the writs of any state jurisdiction in Australia, our people brought endless enthusiasm and professionalism to this enormous task. Apart from core staff, we are fortunate to have thousands of civic-minded members of the community willing to sacrifice their time and energy to help us deliver quality elections with integrity. Without the support of our people, we could not hope to do what we must do.

Having implemented our State election service plan from August 2022, we were well placed to deliver all aspects of the election. More than 1,800 venues were transformed into temporary voting centres, 17,500 casual staff were trained and recruited and over 10 million ballot papers were printed and delivered across the state for a record 4.4 million Victorian voters on the electoral roll.

This was the largest ever State election, with many new and complex challenges emerging. We experienced a shift in elector expectations and behaviours, an increase in the numbers of political parties and candidates, greater difficulty in sourcing suitable election offices and early voting centres, and significant turnover among the pool of senior election officials and casual staff that fill election delivery roles critical for the event. These challenges were compounded by the expiration of public health orders in the month before the election and widespread flooding across large parts of Victoria during the week before early voting commenced.

Despite the challenges, our delivery of the State election was a success.

- ▶ The average confidence rating of the VEC was 8.6 (out of 10) with almost a third of respondents giving a rating of 10. 82% of voters were satisfied with the VEC's services on election day.
- ▶ Turnout was 88.03% and the informality rate decreased to 5.53% (from 5.83% in 2018.)
- ▶ There were 1,194 candidates and 23 registered political parties (RPPs) contesting the election.

A lesson from this election is that the Electoral Act has not kept pace with shifts in Victoria's electoral landscape, including significant population growth and changes to modern election campaigning. Victoria's timeline from issue of the writ to its return is the shortest in Australia.

Our year cont.

This is despite the state having the second highest overall population and the highest metropolitan population. This now poses a significant risk to the VEC's ability to administer Victorian elections to the scale required, within the timeframes prescribed.

We have made a strong case for change in our submission to the Electoral Matters Committee's Inquiry into the conduct of the 2022 State election. The Committee will conduct public hearings and prepare its final report in the coming financial year. We will continue to advocate for change in our report to Parliament on the conduct of the State election.

Electoral landscape

The electoral landscape is becoming increasingly complex. The VEC recognises that retaining public trust is essential for ensuring all Victorian voters participate in their democracy. To do so, we need to demonstrate that democracy is underpinned by integrity, fairness and participation. To respond to a challenging external environment, the VEC has developed a reputation management strategy that aims to ensure the public perception of electoral integrity in elections is maintained and sustainable. One of our new initiatives during the 2022-23 financial year was the launch of a misinformation register on our website to counter the spread of false information about elections, the electoral system and our processes.

Perhaps due to being the first state election since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we found ourselves operating in a particularly heated political environment. This meant we faced greater scrutiny from the public, the media and registered political parties. The safety of our staff was also a concern as we witnessed an increase in aggressive behaviour both online and at voting centres. We will continue to engage with stakeholders, including Victoria Police and Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee, to advocate for solutions to ensure the safety of all participants, and our staff, at future elections.

The electoral climate also drove a significant increase in freedom of information requests and complaints. We received over 3,300 written complaints and feedback submissions in 2022-23. While many of these complaints were complex, our people responded to these with professionalism and patience, resolving 99.10% within target timeframes.

Electoral integrity, funding and disclosure

This was the first state election where full operation of Victoria's political funding and disclosure scheme (introduced in 2018) came into effect. We monitored donations through our online portal VEC Disclosures and undertook compliance and enforcement activity in response to any breaches of the legislation.

One of the key highlights over the past year was the substantial increase in the number of users registering on the VEC Disclosures donations reporting system due to the Victorian State election. Registrations increased by more than 250%, and published donations exceeded \$4.4 million. This represents a significant increase in political funding transparency for Victoria's electoral system.

This year we also developed an electoral integrity framework, which outlines how we will manage and monitor our contribution to electoral integrity in a manner that supports all Victorians actively participating in their democracy. We believe that acceptance and integrity of electoral outcomes is enhanced when there is widespread active participation across the electoral system. Participation is itself enhanced when there is trust and belief in the legitimacy of the electoral system.

Our strategic plan

As *Strategy 2023* entered its final year, we examined our outcomes against the strategy's 4 pillars of 'people', 'technology', 'decision-making' and 'relationships'. The strategy aimed to make the organisation change-ready and ensure we had the people, systems and relationships we needed to make the most of opportunities.

Reflecting on the Strategy 2023 period from 2018 to 2023, our key achievements included:

- ▶ implementing a leadership capability framework as an initial step in an integrated people management approach and embedding this in performance management, leadership development, recruitment and onboarding.
- ▶ investing \$11.2 million into enhancing existing, and creating new, electoral systems including our Election Management System, Roll Management System (in progress), geographic information systems, and funding and disclosure system. We also invested \$5.6 million into corporate system enhancement, including modernising our standard operating environment, launching a new corporate intranet, and upgrading our website.

- ▶ establishing an enterprise risk management approach and comprehensive internal audit program; a project management office to enhance project management and more effectively embed lessons learned in our work; and an information and knowledge management framework to share, use and develop our knowledge to continuously improve Victoria's electoral processes. We also created an online research panel to ensure 'customer voice' is embedded within the organisation.
- ▶ releasing a diversity and inclusion framework and refreshed access and inclusion plans for groups under-represented in the electoral process; a customer feedback framework; and a reputation management framework and strategy that increased our reputation index during the 2022 State election.

In early 2023 we began work on *Strategy 2027*, our next strategic plan. In a changing electoral and cultural landscape, it is essential that we refresh our approach. We will hone our focus to ensure the VEC is trusted to deliver high quality elections with integrity, we continue to provide an enhanced experience for voters, our systems and processes are streamlined and refined to respond to a changing environment, and our people are highly engaged and capable.

We are now progressing an organisational design review so that we can realign the organisation to best deliver the strategy. Implementing these changes will take time and will be a major focus for us in the new financial year.

Farewell

We bid a fond farewell to our longstanding Electoral Commissioner, Warwick Gately AM, at the conclusion of his 10-year term as Electoral Commissioner. Warwick oversaw 3 state elections, 2 local government general elections, a supplementary election, a state electoral boundaries redivision, local government representation reviews and the implementation of our political funding and donations disclosure scheme. He worked collaboratively with other electoral commissions in Australia and New Zealand to foster closer ties and share electoral knowledge, acting as the inaugural chair of the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) in 2016.

Warwick was committed to improving access and equality for all eligible voters and promoting a secure and contemporary electoral system. Never hesitating to applaud the energy, imagination and commitment of the organisation's staff, Warwick fostered a collegial and supportive culture.

We thank Warwick for his fearless leadership and know he will be greatly missed by all at the VEC.

We would also like to thank Máiréad Doyle for stepping into the Deputy Electoral Commissioner role and Binh Le for acting as Executive Director, Corporate Services from Warwick's retirement until Sven's appointment as Electoral Commissioner. Their contribution to the leadership and direction of the VEC has been invaluable.

As incoming Commissioner, Sven would also particularly like to thank Dana for the great contribution she has made to strengthening democracy in Victoria as acting Commissioner.

Future challenges

Looking to the future, we will be changing our approach to continuous improvement across the organisation. While we previously stood up a separate planning group for each electoral event, we are moving to a model of ongoing planning that plans for multiple future elections to better manage election readiness. This will be supported by separate delivery groups for each election.

This maturing of our approach, along with *Strategy 2027* and our organisational realignment, will ensure we are well equipped to manage our coming major commitments, including delivering the 2024 local government elections, completing the electoral structure and ward boundary review programs, and continuing our uplift of the roll management system, or RMS.

We extend our deep gratitude to all people in our organisation for their outstanding work this year and look forward to continuing our work together in 2023-24.

As we look ahead to our next 4-year strategic plan, we will continue to empower all Victorians to actively participate in their democracy by focusing our attention on 4 strategic pillars: trust, voters, processes and systems, and our people.

Together we will deliver high quality, accessible electoral services with innovation, integrity and independence.



Sven Bluemmel
Electoral
Commissioner



Dana Fleming
Deputy Electoral
Commissioner

Our strategic plan

The VEC’s strategic plan, Strategy 2023, concluded in this reporting period. Our 5-year goal was that the VEC is change-ready and has the people, systems and relationships to make the most of opportunities. We made significant progress in achieving our objectives across the 4 strategic pillars: people, technology, decision-making and relationships. The following is a summary of our achievements.

Strategy 2023 was developed in 2018 through extensive consultation with staff and consideration of the VEC’s external and internal operating environment. Our five-year goal was that the VEC is change-ready and has the people, systems and relationships to make the most of opportunities.

Implementation

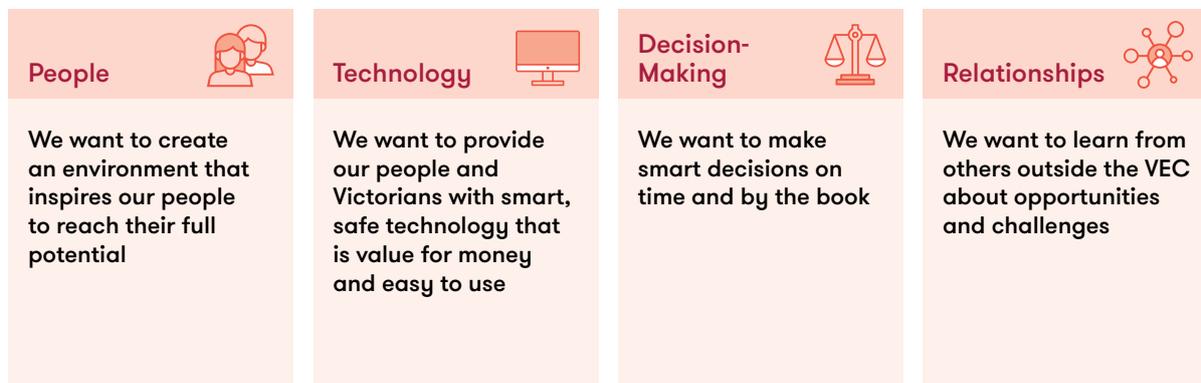
After a mid-term review, the Strategy 2023 implementation plan included 27 programs, projects and initiatives scheduled for commencement or completion from July 2021 to June 2023. At the end of the reporting period 9 were completed, 9 were on track for completion and 9 were delayed. Delayed actions will be reviewed and where they are still considered relevant, will transfer to our new strategic plan, Strategy 2027.

Significant progress was made in these programs:

- ▶ Recommendations arising from the VEC’s 2020 local government elections report to Parliament have been included in our continuous improvement agenda for the 2024 local government elections.
- ▶ The EBC final report on the 2020–21 State redivision was released on 28 October 2021.
- ▶ The VEC made a submission to the Electoral Review Expert Panel’s independent review of electronic assisted voting and Part 12 of the Electoral Act in June 2023.
- ▶ A Strategy 2023 summative evaluation has been completed and the successes and lessons learned have fed into our planning for Strategy 2027.

The Future Focus Program was established in 2021. This overarching program was paused in early 2023 to focus on the development of Strategy 2027.

Figure 1: The pillars of strategy 2023



People

Progress continued in developing transformational leaders, most notably with the introduction of a leadership capability framework and leadership training program, LEAP. During the period, 65% of permanent staff completed basic leadership training, with positive impacts on staff perceptions of leadership across the organisation. However, with the increasing complexity of the VEC's work, staff satisfaction and engagement levels have not significantly improved over the strategic period.

- ▶ Staff satisfaction decreased slightly, ending at 61% from the 2018 baseline of 63%. This final result is down from the peak satisfaction level of 70% in 2021.
- ▶ Similarly, staff engagement ended at 69% from the 2018 baseline of 69%, again peaking in 2021 at 74%.

This may be partially as a result of a very difficult year in delivering the 2022 State election. In any event, the VEC leadership is determined to listen to and work with our staff to make VEC a workplace where everyone is valued, supported and able to flourish.

- ▶ use of feedback, insight and assessment tools for individual coaching, team workshops and talent development.
- ▶ resources and tools to support mentoring and communities of practice.

- ▶ refreshed induction packages, including training on cyber security and electoral fundamentals, and creation of a full suite of state election induction modules.
- ▶ training and tools for new people leaders which will be fully implemented in the next strategic period.
- ▶ investment in e-learning tools, including a new learning management system (Litmos) and access to LinkedIn Learning to provide instant learning opportunities.

These programs had modest results over the period, with satisfaction with learning and development rising from 52% in 2018 to 56% in 2023.

Declines in key metrics were observed in relation to staff wellbeing, including the proportion of respondents indicating that they experienced very high or severe job-related stress rising from 19% to 25%. Satisfaction with work-life balance also decreased in the last year (FY2023), from a strong positive trend before this.

The conduct of the State election in late 2022 likely contributed to these results; however, the VEC takes this feedback seriously and will work to improve further. Priority will be given to introduce or strengthen measures to reduce job-related stress and improve psychosocial safety in the new strategic period.

Our strategic plan cont.

Technology

During this strategic period, we transformed our systems and technology, delivering the VEC's largest IT renewal program.

We invested \$11.2 million into enhancing existing, and creating new, electoral systems including our Election Management System, Roll Management System (in progress), Geographic Information Systems, Funding and Disclosure System and a number of internal and external applications.

We invested a further \$5.6 million into enhancing our corporate systems and tools including modernising our standard operating environment, launching Microsoft 365 and a new corporate intranet and upgrading our website.

We also deployed a range of technical solutions to improve system reliability, availability and security. These enhancements were supported by a program of external monitoring and audit services as well as training for staff, candidates and registered political parties to raise awareness of cyber security threats and responses. Efforts were also made to strengthen connections with external agencies to enhance security intelligence and support.

Over the reporting period significant work has been completed in further implementing the ASD Essential 8 controls (despite the overall number of controls increasing by 25%), along with implementing a range of best-practice security guidance such as phishing simulations and security awareness training. This continues to strengthen the VEC cyber security posture to protect information and systems against more advanced, sophisticated and adaptive adversaries. The VEC Security Strategy (December 2021) informs priority investment through to 2024.

The VEC made significant investment in transforming our technology offering under Strategy 2023; our focus for the next strategic period will be continuous improvement.

Figure 2: VEC performance against PROV metrics (Information Management Maturity)

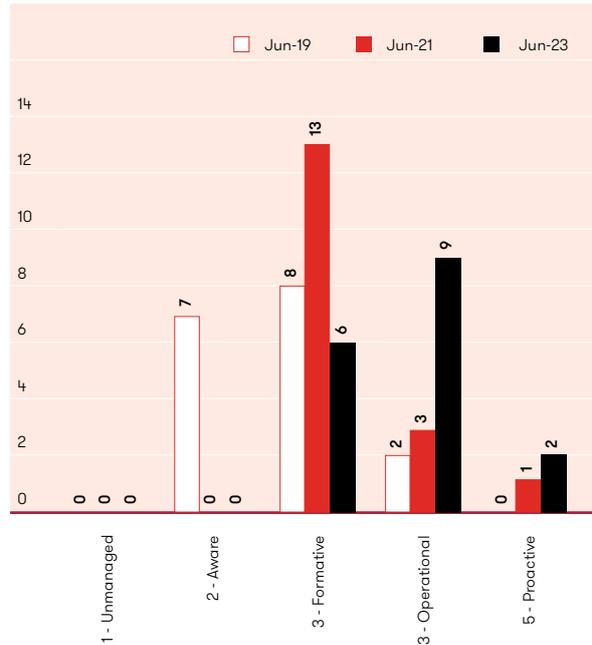
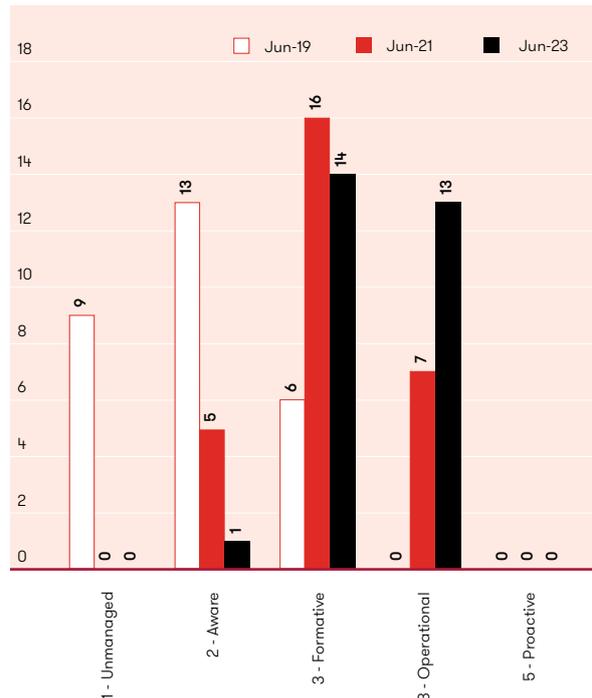


Figure 3: VEC performance on ISO knowledge management metrics (Knowledge Management Maturity)



Decision-making

The VEC invested time and in our people in developing and strengthening our decision-making pathways. We developed new frameworks, strategies and policies related to corporate and electoral compliance, and electoral integrity. We also revised our approach to election program delivery, empowering our program delivery leads to take responsibility for critical election functions.

We strengthened our enterprise risk management approach, including refreshing our risk appetite statement, upgrading our strategic and operational risk registers, training leaders across all branches in risk management processes, developing business continuity plans for major electoral events and conducting 8 risk management exercises. We supported this work with a comprehensive internal audit program, with 82% of 48 recommendations with a high or moderate importance rating being completed or in progress.

In 2020 we established a Project Management Office to improve management of major projects, increase capability across the organisation and enhance how lessons learned are embedded in our work. The VEC continues to maintain a forward register of programs and activities that align with electoral, legislative, strategic and organisational needs. The project pipeline continues to drive improvements in core service delivery.

We also made significant improvements in our management of corporate knowledge and information. We improved our information management maturity rating from 59% of elements rated at 3-Formative or above in 2019, increasing to 100% in 2023. Our knowledge management maturity also increased from 68% of elements rated as 2-Aware or above in 2019, rising to 100% in 2023.

We introduced and implemented a Knowledge Management Framework to help us better share, use and develop our knowledge to continuously improve Victoria's electoral processes. We enhanced information management practice with the introduction of Electra, a SharePoint-based combined intranet and electronic document management system. This platform enabled us to introduce a number of automated workflows, an opportunity that will be further explored in the next strategic period. Privacy impact and business impact level assessments have been deployed across the organisation to support management of the VEC's valuable information assets.

We also delivered an extensive research program, with 23 in-house and collaborative research projects completed or currently in progress. A notable achievement was the establishment of a VEC online research panel which has enabled us to measure our reputation index and quickly and cost-effectively test concepts, take pulse checks and ensure elector feedback is utilised for service delivery design. The panel enables quick feedback for decision-making and ensures that 'customer voice' is embedded within the organisation.

And finally, while we did not deliver an overarching corporate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework as we had intended, we have made progress towards embedding a more robust M&E culture across the VEC with the use of program logics and evaluation frameworks more prevalent.

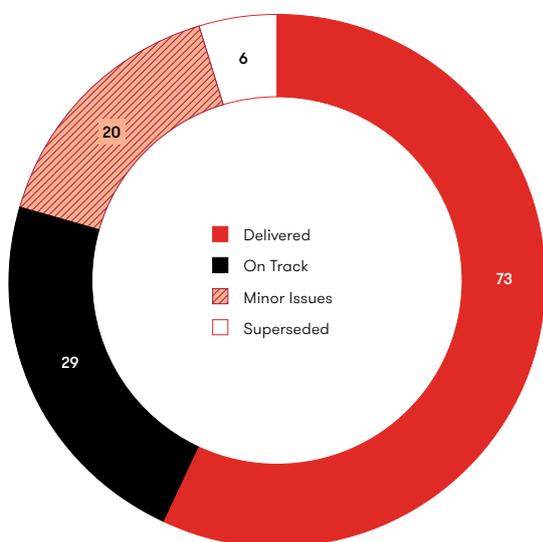
Our strategic plan cont.

Relationships

Our community-facing programs drive us to better understand, anticipate and respond to external opportunities and challenges. Under Strategy 2023 we:

- ▶ Released a Diversity and Inclusion Framework, paving the way for the development of refreshed Access and Inclusion Plans for groups under-represented in the electoral process. These include people living with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people experiencing homelessness or in prison and young people. We have maintained or initiated advisory groups for each of these communities whose input has been invaluable to shape and deliver our action plans. Over the life of Strategy 2023 we have delivered or are continuing to deliver 80% of 128 planned initiatives.

Figure 4: Status of actions from our Action and Inclusion Plans as at June 2023



- ▶ Established stronger relationships within the Victorian Aboriginal community and worked collaboratively to publish a statement on Aboriginal Self-Determination and Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, as well as commencing work on an Aboriginal Action Plan to improve opportunities for electoral participation.
- ▶ Introduced a new Customer Feedback Framework that embeds a number of measures to deliver an improved customer experience. These include new timeframes for responding to customer feedback, optimised workflows for the triaging and resolution of feedback and complaints, and a taskforce of frontline staff to rapidly share intelligence and respond to emerging issues.
- ▶ Used digital innovation to evolve our service delivery, including increased use of social media advertising, and launching VoterAlert, a free election reminder service for the 2018 and 2022 State elections and 2020 local government elections.
- ▶ Provided funding and participated in the activities of the Electoral Regulation Research Network (ERRN), such as presenting and organising ERRN seminars and providing regular contributions to the ERRN Newsletter.
- ▶ Developed a Reputation Management Strategy which we used to guide our approach during the 2022 State election, achieving an increase in our Reputation Index from 3.92 to 4.02 (out of 5, overall weighted average) between September and December 2022. We also strengthened our stakeholder management approach, establishing a Stakeholder Management Framework and Strategy and formalising our engagement with key agencies. We have regular engagement with Federal security and integrity agencies to support our management of electoral integrity risks. And we have established strong relationships with Victoria Police, Emergency Management Victoria and other agencies to support electoral integrity in State and local government elections.
- ▶ Published our Regulatory Approach in October 2022 to provide transparency and assist electoral participants to understand how the VEC will address compliance, investigation and enforcement.

In terms of impact of the VEC's services on voters, the VEC set a target to stay within 1% of the national enrolment rate as reported by the Australian Electoral Commission. Throughout the term of Strategy 2023 we have met this target, with the Victorian enrolment rate 0.4 percentage points higher than the national rate as at 30 June 2023. We have also seen a marginal increase in enrolled electors in all age groups between 18–59 years. However, there was a marginal decline in the 60 and above age groups. More information is available in the 'Register of Electors' section.

Voter engagement remained steady at 85.2% compared with 84% in December 2018, while voter turnout declined to 88% for the State election, down from 90% in 2018. Understanding the driving factors behind this statistic will be a focus for our next strategic period, noting that voter turnout is declining across all jurisdictions in Australia.

Strategy 2027

Our five-year goal was that the VEC is change-ready and has the people, systems and relationships to make the most of opportunities. We have made significant progress towards this goal. However, the electoral environment is changing rapidly, and the need to be change-ready is ever more prevalent. We face many external challenges:

- ▶ Legislative and policy change, and evolving community expectations will continue to impact the VEC's service delivery model.
- ▶ The VEC continues to grow in size and complexity due to these legislative and policy changes and must play a larger role as a regulatory and enforcement authority.
- ▶ Geopolitical instability is increasing along with polarisation of political opinions, exacerbated by the rapid rise of social media and a rise in misinformation and disinformation.
- ▶ Faith in democratic systems is decreasing, with the Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee identifying 'a wealth of evidence showing a worrying decline in the level of public trust'.¹
- ▶ The growing importance of cyber security and the potential for criminals and state actors to disrupt the operation of systems and applications.
- ▶ Political parties and the community expect greater use of technology to support election processes.

To meet these challenges the VEC is in the process of developing a new strategic plan for the period 2023–27. From July 2023, Strategy 2027 will refine the VEC's organisational objectives and priorities and will include an organisation design review to ensure we are structured for success.

¹ Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, 2020

Finance at a glance

The VEC's special appropriation funding fluctuates significantly over the 4-year cycle, as can be seen in Table 1. Every 2 years, the VEC undertakes either a state election or a local government election program. As the reporting financial year is an election year, the VEC's overall funding and expenditure increased in comparison to 2021-22. Total funding received during 2022-23 was \$140.6 million, which is made up of VEC base level funding plus approved election funding uplift to ensure successful delivery of the 2022 State election. The table below summarises movement in special appropriation funding, expenses, balance sheet items and net cash flows.

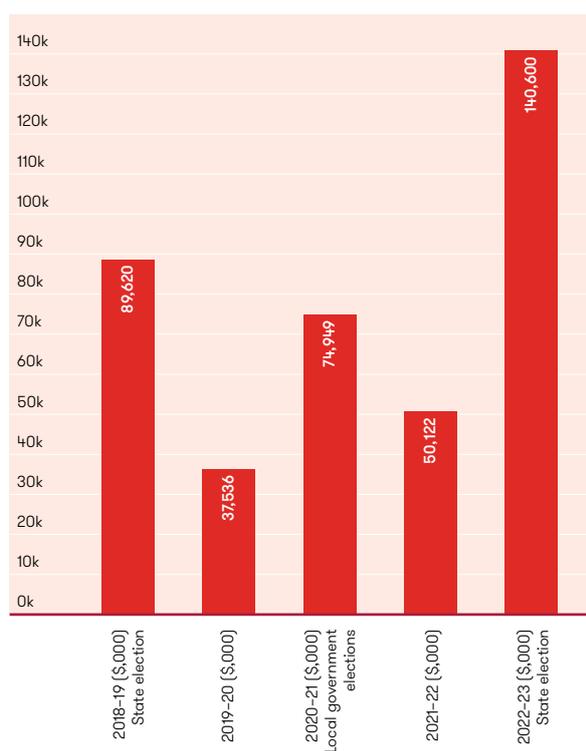
Financial performance

Table 1: Five-year financial summary, 2018-19 to 2022-23

	2018-19 \$'000	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000	2021-22 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000
Electoral activity	State election		Local government elections		State Election
Special appropriation	89,620	37,536	74,949	50,122	140,600
Total expenses from transactions	94,298	38,576	80,373	50,736	150,273
Net result from transactions	-4,678	-1,040	-5,424	-614	-9,673
Operating result	-4,780	-966	-5,338	-242	-9,605
Net cash flow from/(used in) operating activities	-14	531	-241	-206	-165
Total assets	17,939	23,999	24,343	30,935	30,066
Total liabilities	5,805	6,120	6,795	7,919	9,948
Net assets	12,134	17,879	17,548	23,016	20,118

Funding

Figure 5: Special Appropriation (\$'000) 2018-19 to 2022-23



The VEC received \$140.60 million in funding for 2022-23, which is significantly more than the prior year of \$50.12 million. The VEC is funded solely from Government special appropriations and this amount represents the reimbursement to the VEC for all its cash payments.

In addition, the VEC administers or manages other activities and resources on behalf of the State and local governments, and this income for the year was \$21.80 million. This is not shown in the VEC financial results or in the financial statements, but is presented in Note 4.1: Administered (non-controlled) items. The administered activities are made up of: revenue collected by the VEC on behalf of the State, which is forwarded to the Department of Treasury and Finance as consolidated revenue, monies received from election fines and forfeited candidate deposits collected by the VEC on behalf of councils, and the State payment of 2022 State election public funding and administrative expenditure funding.

Finance at a glance cont.

Expenditure

The VEC incurred \$150.27 million in operational expenses for the financial period. The majority of VEC's funding was committed towards delivery of the 2022 State election along with other electoral regulatory functions. The year-end reported operating loss is largely due to non-cash expenditure such as depreciation, staff entitlements and accruals. Government reimbursement for appropriation does not include non-cash expenses.

In relation to the 2022 State election, major areas of expenditure included:

- ▶ Upscaled election workforce and staffing across the state to support processing centres, early voting centres and voting centres
- ▶ Infrastructure support across all election sites
- ▶ Enhanced IT security infrastructure to manage and protect VEC's roll management system and election management system
- ▶ Advertising and awareness campaigns
- ▶ Print and production of ballot material
- ▶ Special outreach programs (homeless, ethnic groups, prisoners, disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)
- ▶ Telephone assisted voting and other electoral services to support flood impacted Victorians

Financial position

The VEC's financial position remains strong with total assets of \$30.07 million, liabilities at \$9.95 million and overall net equity of \$20.12 million. The VEC's assets are largely comprised of enterprise electoral systems such as the new Election Management System (EMS2), the Funding and Disclosure system, ongoing investment in election infrastructure, cyber security, and election inventory including PPE, many of which were acquired ahead of the November 2022 State election. The majority of VEC systems and programs are custom built to enable the VEC to conduct elections in accordance with legislative requirements. These capital investments are presented as intangible assets. Further, the VEC does not hold a cash reserve in its bank accounts as it is reimbursed daily for all outgoings incurred.

The VEC's liabilities largely comprise employee entitlements and year-end expenditure accruals. The equity of the VEC is split into contributed capital, asset reserve and accumulated loss. The contributed capital represents the amount of funding contributed by the Government of Victoria for the purchase and development of VEC non-current assets. The accumulated loss represents the accumulated result from continuing its operations.

Operational and budgetary objectives and performance against objectives

The VEC has 3 performance measures that relate specifically to Budget Paper Number 3 (BP3) Service Delivery, in accordance with the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) FRDs. The following table provides details of the output report provided by the VEC to the Government, including performance measures and targets for agreed outputs, and the actual performance results for the VEC over the full year ending 30 June 2023.

Table 2: VEC performance against Budget Paper 3 targets

	ELECTION EVENTS CONDUCTED BY THE VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION, INCLUDING STATE ELECTIONS AND BY-ELECTIONS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, BY-ELECTIONS AND COUNTBACKS, AND STATUTORY ELECTIONS OR POLLS	ELECTION EVENTS INVALIDATED BY A COURT OF DISPUTED RETURNS AS A RESULT OF A PROVEN CLAIM AGAINST THE VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION'S CONDUCT OF THAT EVENT	MEETS TIMEFRAMES FOR APPLICATION OF ELECTORINITIATED ENROLMENT, DIRECT ENROLMENT AND CLOSE OF ROLL ENROLMENT ACTIVITY IN THE MAINTENANCE AND ACCURACY OF THE REGISTER OF ELECTORS
2018–19 BP3 target	115	-	95%
2018–19 BP3 actual	117	-	97%
Variance	2%	0%	2%
2019–20 BP3 target	22	-	95%
2019–20 BP3 actual	23	-	100%
Variance	4.50%	0%	5%
2020–21 BP3 target	22	-	90%
2020–21 BP3 actual	10	-	100%
Variance	-55%	0%	10%
2021–22 BP3 target	28	-	90%
2021–22 BP3 actual	21	-	98.90%
Variance	-25%	0%	9%
2022–23 BP3 target	28	-	95%
2022–23 BP3 actual	26	-	99.50%
Variance	-7%	0%	5%



MAX KARANFILOVSKI

Title: Office Assistant
Branch: Electoral Integrity and Regulation

“Every time I’ve contributed to a discussion, senior staff have approached my contributions with curiosity and respect.”

SPOTLIGHT ON...

How does your role promote the vision of the VEC?

I help my team discover and solve policy problems relating to electoral laws and regulations that affect Victorians and the VEC. Victorians need to understand the electoral laws and especially the Part 12 scheme about making donations. A common way people contribute to politics is through donations, so having a clear understanding helps everyone feel confident there is an equal accessible playing field.

This includes people inside the VEC as well, we need to ensure a good understanding of the law to guarantee it’s applied consistently and fairly because at the end of the day the public often interact with the VEC. We need to help develop understanding on both sides of that interaction.

What makes the VEC an innovative and engaging place to work?

One of the most impressive features of the VEC culture is the candour, respectfulness and openness of leaders. Every time I’ve contributed to a discussion senior staff have approached my contributions with curiosity and respect. The environment welcomes candid advice and development – everyone here knows that our people don’t always have perfect answers, especially in my team where we grapple with complicated policy questions and dense legislation.

What was a key lesson you learned from working on the state election?

I worked as a democracy ambassador in the 2022 election, it was critical to engage priority voter groups. There is a real need to educate and bring in marginalised groups to our democratic experience. It took me all over Victoria, to prisons, aged care facilities and shelters for people without a home. This was an eye-opening experience and reminded me that not everyone comes to an election with the same background. It was important to actively reach out and bring democracy to those people – large portions of people in aged care facilities for example simply can’t leave due to health reasons.

The lesson was that different life experiences make for more challenging pathways to participate in democracy and that we need to actively reach out and meet them where they are, bringing democracy to them.

What do you like to do outside of work?

While I am employed by the VEC I’m also a part time student at the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in politics and international relations). The University of Melbourne is actually how I became interested in the VEC! I took an internship subject which I had to work on assignments, take my other classes and work at the VEC two days a week. The two really feed into each other – my academic interests exposed me to the worrying trend of democratic backsliding and declining trust in institutions. When I’m not thinking about saving democracy you can catch me at the movies – my controversial take, Barbie was a better movie than Oppenheimer.

Our organisation

ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-23



Prepared the VEC's submission to the Electoral Matters Committee inquiry into the conduct of the 2022 Victorian State election



Evolved our election governance approach to establish an Election Planning Group to drive delivery and governance of key continuous improvement projects, and an Election Delivery Group to drive delivery of electoral events



Prepared the VEC's submission to the Electoral Review Expert Panel, with detailed recommendations to enhance funding and disclosure administration



Developed an Electoral Integrity Framework which outlines how the VEC contributes to electoral integrity in Victoria



Published our regulatory approach showing how we apply our commitment to constructive compliance, supporting and enabling people to comply with their legal obligations, as part of our regulatory enforcement role



Responded to over 3,300 written complaints and feedback submissions, with the average response time 2.8 working days



Achieved a gold award at the 2023 Australasian Reporting Awards for our 2021-22 Annual Report



Completed significant IT development work prior to the State election, including the culmination of a multi-year upgrade of the Election Management System

OUTLOOK 2023-24



Deliver our next strategic plan, Strategy 2027 and complete a review of our operating model and update our organisational design to ensure we are structured to support its delivery



Table in Parliament a report on the 2022 State election and Narracan supplementary election



Continue to provide administrative and technical support to Electoral Representation Advisory Panels established by the Minister for Local Government



Deliver local government ward boundary reviews for those local councils determined by the Minister for Local Government



Continue to contribute to the independent review of Victoria's political funding and donation disclosure laws



Incorporate sustainability goals in large-scale procurement and investment decisions, and work directly with VEC suppliers to pursue and develop sustainable business outcomes



Continue work to uplift our Roll Management System platform

Governance

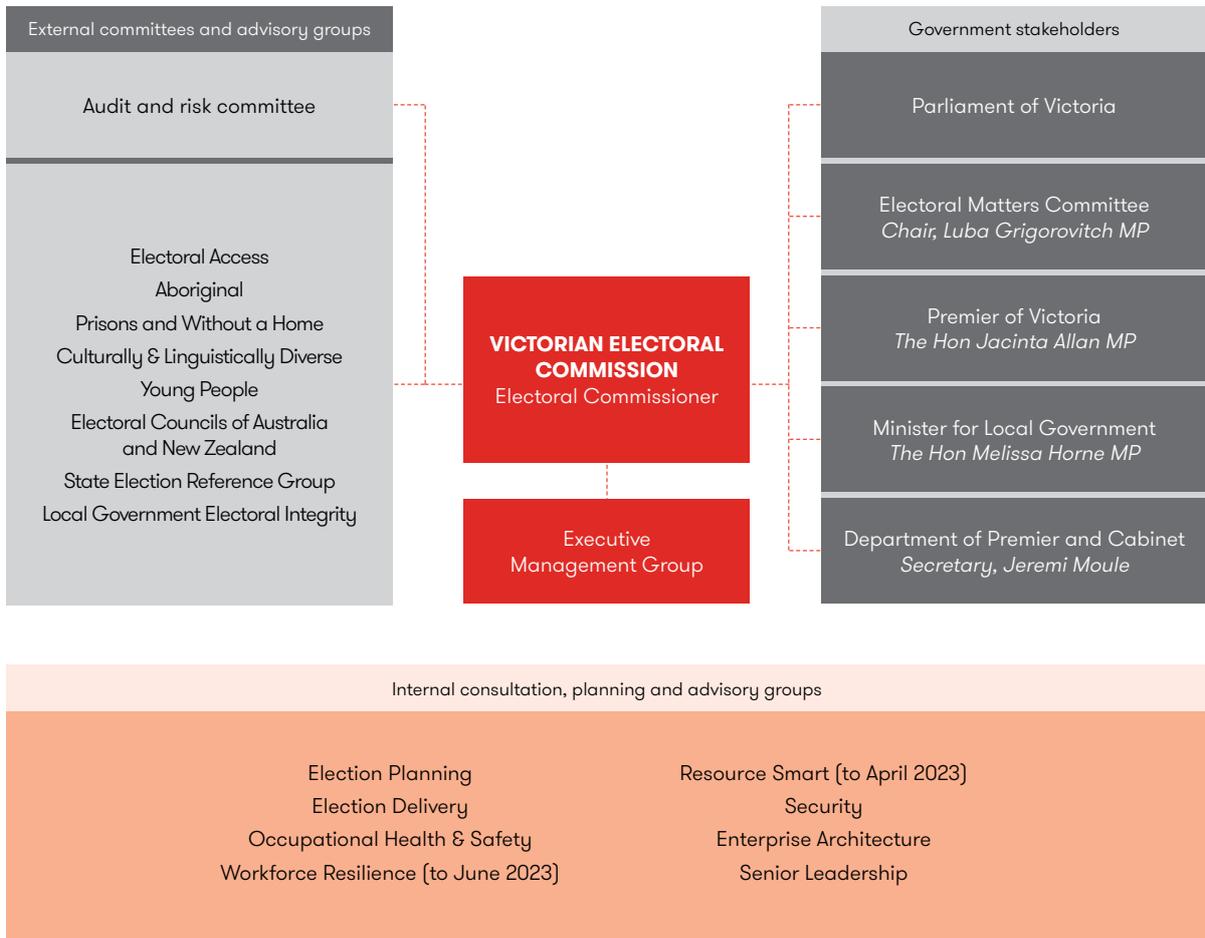
The VEC is the independent administrative agency through which the Electoral Commissioner’s legislative obligations are exercised.

It operates under the auspices of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), but it is not subject to the direction or control of the relevant minister in respect to the performance of its responsibilities and functions, or the exercise of its powers. During the reporting period, the Hon. Danny Pearson MP, Minister for Government Services, had responsibility for the *Electoral Act 2002*^{*}, while the Hon. Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Local Government, has ongoing responsibility for the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Secretary of the DPC, Jeremi Moule, is responsible for providing support to the Premier and Cabinet on matters relating to the VEC. The VEC thanks the Secretary for his assistance in conveying relevant information to Government on the operations of the VEC.

The VEC is committed to ensuring its policies and practices reflect good governance and comply with relevant legislation. Adherence to a robust governance framework demonstrates accountability to stakeholders and ensures the vitality and impartiality of the electoral system, now and into the future. Staffing and work practices are determined by the *Public Administration Act 2004* and guided by the VPSC.

Figure 6: Governance and consultation structure of the VEC

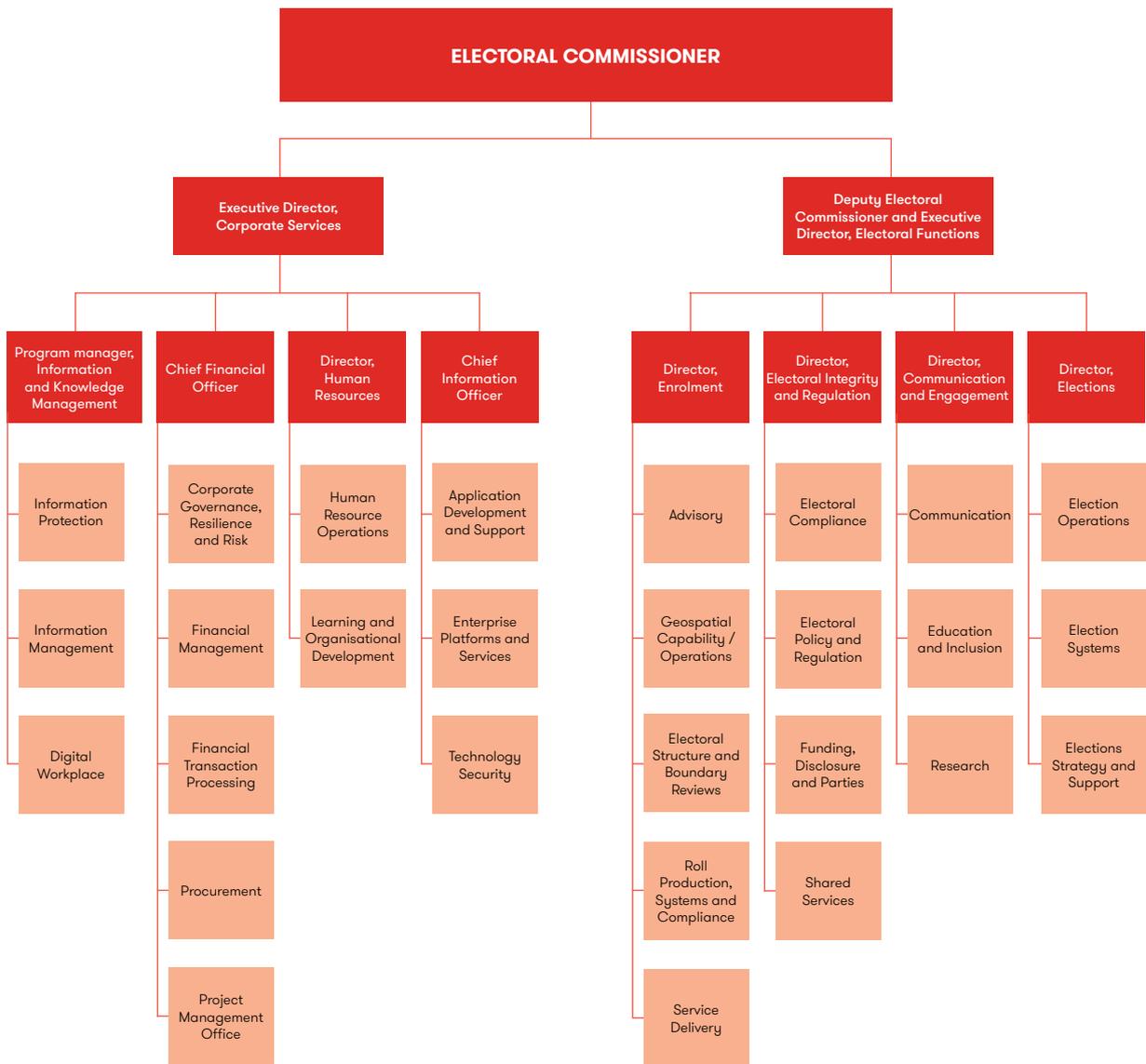


^{*} From 2 October 2023, responsibility transferred to the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Jacinta Allan MP.

Organisational structure

The VEC’s organisational structure reflects its main activity areas(see Figure 7). In 2022-23 the VEC commenced a review of its operating model, to achieve alignment with the emerging strategic plan for 2023-27. Formal consultation with staff and our union on a proposed new organisational structure will commence in 2023-24.

Figure 7: VEC organisational structure



The Office of the Electoral Commissioner



Warwick Gately AM
MDefStud, BA, GAICD
Electoral Commissioner
(to 29 April 2023)

The Electoral Commissioner is appointed by the Governor in Council for a period of 10 years and is responsible for the administration of the enrolment process and the conduct of Parliamentary elections and referendums in Victoria.

Mr Warwick Gately AM was appointed as the Electoral Commissioner for Victoria on 29 April 2013 and his term ended in April 2023. Warwick demonstrated commitment and leadership in the provision of effective electoral services to the Victorian community, as evidenced by the successful delivery of the 2014, 2018 and 2022 State elections and the 2016 and 2020 local government elections. Warwick leaves a strong and positive legacy for democracy in Victoria.



Sven Bluemmel
LLB (Hons.), BSc
Electoral Commissioner
(from 15 August 2023)

Mr Bluemmel was appointed as the Electoral Commissioner for Victoria on 15 August 2023. Sven is responsible for the administration of the enrolment process and the conduct of Parliamentary elections and referendums in Victoria. He works closely with the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and the Executive Director, Corporate Services in the management and administration of the VEC. Sven is the VEC's Chief Executive Officer and remains responsible for all elements of performance and compliance.

Sven previously served as the inaugural Victorian Information Commissioner from September 2017 and held this post until August 2023. He served as Western Australian Information Commissioner and has held senior positions in the Western Australian and Commonwealth public sectors. Prior to his public service roles, Sven practised information and privacy law in the private sector in Melbourne and Perth. He is a fellow of Leadership Western Australia and served as President of the Institute of Public Administration in Western Australia for 3 years.



Dana Fleming
BCom, FCA, CTA, GAICD
Deputy Electoral Commissioner
Acting Electoral Commissioner

Dana joined the VEC in August 2021 as the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and was acting Electoral Commissioner from 18 November 2022 to 10 January 2023, and from 30 March 2023 until a new Electoral Commissioner was appointed by the Governor in Council.

Dana works closely with the Electoral Commissioner and Executive Director, Corporate Services in the leadership and administration of the VEC.

Dana leads the Electoral Functions Group, which has responsibility for the delivery of elections, enrolment services, communication and community engagement, research and the administration of Victoria's political funding and disclosure laws. She oversees the VEC's work with other Australian electoral management bodies, the Electoral Matters Committee and local stakeholders to foster continuous innovation and improved accessibility in the VEC's electoral program delivery.

Dana has over 25 years' experience as both a corporate leader and senior public servant with a track record of executive leadership in complex environments. She has a wealth of experience from her previous roles as a senior partner at KPMG and acting as the Deputy Commissioner for Superannuation & Employer Obligations at the Australian Taxation Office. Dana has a deep understanding of regulation and compliance, delivery of government programs and working closely with stakeholders.



Máiréad Doyle
BE CEng
Executive Director,
Corporate Services
Acting Deputy Electoral
Commissioner

Máiréad joined the VEC in March 2018 as the Executive Director, Corporate Services and was acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner from May to August 2023.

Máiréad works closely with the Electoral Commissioner and Deputy Electoral Commissioner in the leadership and administration of the VEC. She leads the Corporate Services Group, encompassing Human Resources, Finance, Information Technology and Information Management. Máiréad's principal remit is to oversee and shape corporate strategy, planning and governance to ensure the VEC's ongoing ability to respond to current and future operational requirements.

Máiréad's early profession as a chartered mechanical engineer in the oil and gas sector in Europe led to a 30-year career in executive leadership roles in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, focusing on productivity and operational resilience.

The Executive Management Group



Binh Le
BFin, GradCertAcct,
FIPA, FFA, GAICD
Chief Financial Officer
Acting Executive Director,
Corporate Services

Binh joined the VEC in 2016 as Chief Financial Officer and retained this role while also acting as Executive Director, Corporate Services from 5 April to 29 September 2023. Binh leads the Finance and Corporate Governance Branch. A Fellow of the Institute of Public Accountants and graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Binh brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the position.

Binh has held several senior financial positions in the private and public sector, namely as the Group Business Manager in the Agriculture, Energy and Resources portfolio in the Victorian Government; Senior Finance Manager for the National Transport Commission; and Financial Controller for the online travel agent Webjet.

Finance and Corporate Governance Branch

The Finance and Corporate Governance Branch ensures the VEC has an effective financial management and governance environment, including:

- ▶ governance, compliance, procurement and risk practices
- ▶ program management and reporting
- ▶ financial management structures, systems, policies and procedures
- ▶ financial planning, budgeting and reporting
- ▶ sound financial operations
- ▶ crisis and business resilience management.

The Executive Management Group (EMG) comprises the Electoral Commissioner; Deputy Electoral Commissioner; Executive Director, Corporate Services; and the 7 directors leading the main functional areas of the VEC.

Working cooperatively, the EMG sets the VEC's strategic direction and delivers the operational plans that underpin the efficient and effective delivery of electoral services to all Victorians. The EMG meets monthly to consider the risks, issues and opportunities facing the VEC and address general compliance, governance and reporting obligations.



Sue Lang
BA (Media Studies)
 Director

Sue leads the Communication and Engagement Branch, providing oversight and direction to our communication, education and inclusion, and research teams.

Sue's focus is on the delivery of research-based internal and external communication, aiming for increased public awareness and, where appropriate, behavioural change. Sue is an advocate of human-centred design for service, product and communication development.

Sue joined the VEC in 2006 after spending much of her career within Victoria's public service in senior leadership roles at Maroondah City Council, Melbourne Water, South East Water, and Victoria's former Department of Infrastructure and the Department of Treasury and Finance. She has significant expertise in major public awareness and stakeholder engagement programs, reputation management and digital communication techniques.

Communication and Engagement Branch

The Communication and Engagement Branch comprises 3 distinct teams and provides a number of communication, outreach and education services including:

- ▶ provision of internal communication and corporate communication services for the VEC
- ▶ development and implementation of major public awareness campaigns for electoral events across traditional and digital channels for all Victorian electors to foster participation and ensure regulatory compliance
- ▶ development of stakeholder engagement programs relating to electoral participation and inclusion
- ▶ provision of electoral education and outreach services
- ▶ provision of advice on electoral legislation, electoral structures and strategic matters
- ▶ provision of research services and information.



Ben Sutherland
BSocSc (Criminal Justice),
Juris Doctor, GDip Legal
Practice
 Director

Ben leads the Elections Branch, which is comprised of 3 divisions: election operations, systems and strategy. The focus of the Branch is on the planning, preparation and delivery of the VEC's electoral events. The Director, Elections is best described as the operational lead for the organisation. Ben is committed to service excellence seeking out opportunities to refine and improve the VEC's operating model.

Ben is a qualified lawyer, mediator and operational leader who has worked across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Prior to his appointment with the VEC, Ben worked in senior roles with the Australian Electoral Commission and the Department of Justice and Regulation. He brings significant experience in managing large-scale operations across Victoria.

Elections Branch

The Elections Branch is responsible for overseeing the planning and conduct of parliamentary, local government and fee-for-service elections, by-elections and countbacks.

Key responsibilities include:

- ▶ program management and delivery of all parliamentary, local government and fee-for-service elections
- ▶ election systems
- ▶ election staff training, appointment and management
- ▶ instructional products, ballot material, print and design
- ▶ candidate services
- ▶ field policy, procedure and coordination
- ▶ voting services
- ▶ compulsory voting enforcement
- ▶ warehouse management
- ▶ logistics
- ▶ venue and resource management.

The Executive Management Group cont.



Jude Pettitt OAM
MA (Communication),
BEcon&Pol, DipEd, GAICD,
BBus (Management), EMPA
Director

Jude joined the VEC as interim Director, Enrolment in 2023 after previously working with the VEC in 2019 as interim Director, Human Resources.

Jude is responsible for overseeing the establishment, maintenance and update of the Victorian register of electors, preparation of electoral rolls, provision of enrolment information to political parties, members and candidates, and enrolment objections. She is also responsible for supporting local government structure and boundary reviews and State redivision review programs, which ensure the establishment of electoral structures that provide fair and equitable representation for voters.

With over 20 years in leadership roles in regulatory environments including VicRoads and AHPRA, Jude brings a wealth of experience in change management, communication, stakeholder management, leadership and corporate transformation.

Electoral Enrolment Branch

The Electoral Enrolment Branch is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date and accurate register of electors. The Electoral Enrolment Branch services include:

- ▶ delivery of electoral enrolment programs
- ▶ support for local government electoral structure reviews by the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel
- ▶ conducting reviews of local government ward boundaries
- ▶ support for electoral boundary redivisions by the Electoral Boundaries Commission
- ▶ production of electoral rolls, roll products and mapping products to support the work of the VEC
- ▶ provision of advice on electoral enrolment matters.



Keegan Bartlett
MPPM, BA, GDipCom,
GAICD
Director

Keegan has led the Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch since 2019, having held various program management and senior leadership roles since joining the VEC in 2010.

Keegan leads a multi-disciplinary team providing expert advice and support on compliance, integrity, policy and regulatory matters, and directs the VEC's strategic engagement with other enforcement and integrity partners. Keegan represents the VEC on national and state electoral compliance working groups and oversees the VEC's contributions to electoral law.

The role brings together Keegan's electoral practice in Victoria with his background in Australia and New Zealand developing policies and relationships to promote good governance, a commitment to compliant practices, continuous improvement, and effective, transparent decision-making processes.

Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch

The Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch:

- ▶ administers the VEC's electoral integrity, compliance, enforcement and regulatory activities, and oversees Victoria's political funding and disclosure laws
- ▶ informs and supports the planning and delivery of the VEC's electoral functions to enhance and protect the integrity of Victoria's electoral processes
- ▶ coordinates disputes and litigation involving the Electoral Commissioner
- ▶ partners closely with all stakeholders to ensure the successful conduct of electoral programs within a highly regulated environment.



Angela Kelly
BAppSc, GDip HR
Director

As the Director of Human Resources, Angela leads a small team of professionals dedicated to ensuring the VEC is an amazing place to work.

With extensive senior HR leadership experience, Angela is a skilled change agent, driven to ensure that HR helps deliver exceptional organisational outcomes and employee experiences, making sure that people and culture programs directly support the strategic plan.

Angela joined the VEC in 2019, coming from a diverse corporate background across a variety of sectors, including the arts, professional services, agriculture, IT, and banking and finance.

Human Resources Branch

The Human Resources Branch supports the development of a workforce of skilled, accountable, collaborative people who are adaptable to change and supported to be the best.

This is achieved through the 5 pillars of the human resources strategy:

- ▶ providing meaningful work
- ▶ developing responsive leadership
- ▶ cultivating a positive work environment
- ▶ enabling growth opportunities
- ▶ supporting trusted leadership.



Chris Pivec
BSc (Hons)
Chief Information Officer

Chris joined the VEC in 2021 as the Chief Information Officer (CIO).

Chris seeks to promote technology-enabled modernisation, drive information governance, develop the VEC's enterprise architecture, and ensure that the Commission is supported by future-ready, high-quality and secure information technology, enabling the VEC to deliver trusted service to the Victorian public now and into the future. He believes in strong stakeholder partnership and an inclusive leadership style where people are empowered and supported to deliver their best.

Chris has over 25 years' experience as a technology leader and CIO in a range of large and complex organisations across the private, financial services, public and not-for-profit sectors. He brings a wealth of experience in leading and building customer-focused teams through continuous improvement, major projects, and enterprise transformation.

Information Technology Branch

The IT Branch is responsible for:

- ▶ application design, development and quality assurance
- ▶ enterprise architecture
- ▶ cyber security
- ▶ service desk
- ▶ VEC's enterprise cloud platforms, servers and network.

Internal committees and groups

Several consultation committees and groups assist the Electoral Commissioner and the EMG with the development and implementation of strategies and policies, providing expertise and promoting staff consultation.

Election Planning Group and Election Delivery Group

In order to deliver electoral events, the VEC establishes major cross-organisational working groups that track and monitor the planning and delivery of electoral events. During 2022–23, the VEC established the 2022 State election planning group, whose final activities will complete in August 2023. Following learnings from this election the VEC has separated the ‘planning group’ into 2 groups that can better support a strategic approach to the way we *plan* and subsequently *deliver* electoral events.

Election Planning Group has been established to drive delivery and governance of key continuous improvement projects traditionally siloed in branches. The projects are not event specific but rather have a multiple election focus tied to product and service design, reflecting the VEC’s focus on refining its operating model with a longer-term vision in mind. Election Planning Group meets monthly and is represented by senior project sponsors from each function within the VEC.

Election Delivery Group was created to drive delivery and governance of electoral events. This group has a narrow focus on the delivery window of an event and better maps capability to election critical roles. Election Delivery Group is established upon the publishing of the draft Service Delivery Plan and monitors and responds to any issues associated with its implementation. Election Delivery Group is comprised of program delivery leads who are responsible for critical election functions.

Security Committee

Good security means making sure that the VEC’s people, places, information assets, financial information, elector data, and other sensitive details are secure. It also means protecting the organisation from threats and attacks that could disrupt democratic processes, cause physical harm, or lead to the theft of assets or unauthorised access to information.

The Security Committee aims to ensure the VEC is highly resilient and well-protected by continuously improving security practices, enhancing compliance efforts, and maintaining the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information held or used by the VEC.

The Security Committee has a strategic focus for each security domain to ensure ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements and increasing maturity, in accord with the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards.

Occupational Health and Safety Committee

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC) serves as a forum facilitating engagement and communication between the EMG and employees on all things OHS-related. The focus of the OHSC is to bring to light and discuss issues likely to affect the health, safety and welfare of all staff in VEC workplaces, in line with the VEC's obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

OHSC members continue to provide insights and input into the VEC's health and safety programs. They have an important role to play in supporting staff safety and wellbeing in preparation and delivery of the 2024 Local Government elections.

In 2022–23, OHSC meetings were deferred to accommodate delivery of the State election. The Committee met once in the reporting period but OHS-related matters were discussed and escalated regularly in the State election Planning Group meetings. The OHSC terms of reference and membership were reviewed in this reporting period and quarterly meetings have now recommenced.

Workforce Resilience Group

In response to the effects the COVID-19 pandemic had on staff wellbeing, psychological safety and social cohesion, the VEC's executive recognised the need for a supportive, staff-led initiative to rebuild connections across our teams. In February 2022 a workforce resilience group was established, with the support of an independent advisor, Dr Kate Brady, who has a PhD in public health with a focus on disaster recovery.

The Workforce Resilience Group's (WRG's) purpose was to seek ways of engaging with staff to promote recovery and re-engagement with colleagues after 24 months of COVID-19 disruption. Its approach was based on the principles of community-led disaster recovery and the 'nothing about us without us' approach. Three key areas of focus were 'Feeling Connected', 'Leisure and Pleasure' and 'Our New Normal', referencing the shift to a hybrid model of working.

Internal committees and groups cont.

The WRG had several key achievements.

- ▶ A presentation to all staff on workforce resilience and community-led disaster recovery.
- ▶ A latte lottery – 80 staff participated in an initiative to connect people from different branches, many of whom had never had the opportunity to meet each other during COVID lockdowns. Participating staff were randomly matched and encouraged to arrange a meeting with each other, with the VEC providing coffee vouchers for 2 local cafes to encourage participation.
- ▶ A calendar competition – all VEC staff were invited to submit photographs on the theme of ‘connection’ for inclusion in the VEC 2023 calendar. A copy of the calendar was gifted to each VEC staff member and additional copies sold to raise funds for the competition winner’s preferred charity.
- ▶ ‘Frocktober’ morning tea – on 20 October 2022, the VEC hosted a ‘Frocktober’ event in support of the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation (OCRF). VEC staff enjoyed dressing up and coming together socially to support OCRF’s planned research focused on early detection, new treatments and prevention. This event raised a total of \$1,548 for the OCRF.

The WRG was disbanded in June 2023, in recognition of the organisation and workforce having recovered from COVID-19 disruptions. In 2023–24, initiatives such as the ‘thrive at work’ program and re-invigorated ‘Culture Club’ will provide ongoing forums for continuing the work started by the WRG to promote psychological safety, wellbeing and social cohesion in the workplace.

Resource Smart Committee

The VEC’s Resource Smart Committee (RSC) was established to drive initiatives and positive change within the workplace relating to sustainability practices. Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–21, the VEC has shifted to a hybrid work environment, resulting in some challenges for this committee-based structure.

In 2022–23, the VEC focused its efforts on areas where greatest environmental outcomes could be achieved. Sustainability goals in large-scale procurement and investment decisions and working directly with VEC suppliers to pursue and develop sustainable business outcomes now typify the VEC’s approach. This allows the VEC to align its sustainability practices with the Social Procurement Strategy. Responsibility for delivery of the sustainability policy and initiatives now sits with the VEC’s Chief Procurement Officer, and the RSC was disbanded in April 2023.

The VEC will continue to actively communicate information to encourage and assist employees to adopt a culture of sustainability and will report on its achievements through its annual report.

External advisory groups

The VEC is fortunate to have representation from a broad range of community organisations and individuals who provide invaluable advice and insight into issues that impact electors' ability to participate in elections.

The VEC has 5 active community advisory groups:

- ▶ Aboriginal Advisory Group
- ▶ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Advisory Group
- ▶ Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG), representing people with disabilities
- ▶ Prisons and Without a Home Advisory Group (PWHAG), representing people experiencing homelessness or in prison
- ▶ Young People Advisory Group (YPAG).

All groups met separately at least once this year and were involved in a combined meeting providing feedback on delivery of the 2022 State election. Members also supported the VEC by providing insights into: development of the VEC's next 4-year strategy, the implementation of the Multicultural Inclusion Plan, the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, the Young People Inclusion Plan, the Out of Home Action Plan, and preliminary input on the development of the program logic for the next Aboriginal Access and Inclusion Plan.

The VEC would like to thank all advisory group members for their extraordinary commitment, time, and advice during the last 12 months to continue to support the electoral engagement of people who have been traditionally under-represented in the electoral process.

Aboriginal Advisory Group

The Aboriginal Advisory Group comprises highly respected Aboriginal elders and leaders from across Victoria. They support the VEC to embed its Statement on Self Determination and Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians in electoral engagement initiatives which target Aboriginal people living in Victoria. Their cultural knowledge, personal reputation and standing in their own communities has helped the VEC to work in a culturally safe way, while also helping to facilitate more meaningful connections within Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

This year the Aboriginal Advisory Group provided cultural guidance to the VEC's young Aboriginal Democracy Ambassadors, supported mobile voting during the 2022 State election at sites through the relationships Advisory Group members had with communities, attended community engagement events alongside the Aboriginal Inclusion team, and regularly assisted the VEC by providing feedback on internal processes and documents to ensure cultural inclusivity.

External advisory groups cont.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Advisory Group

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Advisory Group comprises representatives from multicultural organisations across community and government sectors including the Victorian Multicultural Commission, AMES Australia and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. The CALD Advisory Group ensures the VEC's work is more reflective of CALD communities' electoral participation needs and centres the communities' voice for the VEC's work. This year; members provided expert insight and advice on the implementation of the VEC's Multicultural Inclusion Plan (MIP), as well as the delivery of projects during the 2022 State election to ensure the VEC continues to improve its service delivery to diverse and growing CALD communities. Specific aims are to increase participation, increase awareness of supports and resources available, and reduce informal voting.

Electoral Access Advisory Group

This year there was a review and consultation of membership on the Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG). New community representatives with lived experience and disability services were recruited. Current members include Scope, Vision Australia, Blind Citizens Australia, Amaze, Yooralla, Carers Victoria, VALID and Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities.

The EAAG provided input on the implementation of the VEC Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2019–23. It also assisted the delivery of electoral engagement initiatives for people with disabilities for the 2022 State election. The most notable example of this was the outreach education and enrolment sessions presented to the community and the distribution of an updated facilitator guide for the VEC's Voting is for Everyone resource.

Prisons and Without a Home Advisory Group

The group represents people experiencing homelessness and incarceration. This year, a review of group membership ensured membership remains diverse and active. The group comprises representatives from the Salvation Army Crisis Centre, Sacred Heart Mission, the Council to Homeless Persons, along with peer support workers and people with lived experience of homelessness and imprisonment.

The group provided advice on implementing the VEC's Prisons and Without a Home Action Plan, and feedback on the delivery of the 2022 State election, in particular the Voting Matters and Mythbusting street poster campaigns that were directed towards people experiencing homelessness.

Young People Advisory Group

The Young People Advisory Group (YPAG) was established this year and comprises young people and organisations which work in the youth sector including YMCA Vic, Foundation for Young Australians and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. In its inaugural year, the YPAG provided feedback on the VEC Child Safety Statement and Policy, strategies to support enrolment initiatives to reach young people, strategies to recruit young people more effectively to work at election events, and increase the participation of young people in local council elections.

2023 VEC Advisory Group Effectiveness

The VEC monitors and reports a set of measures to ensure Advisory Group members are supported to advise and challenge the VEC so that communities and individuals are empowered to enrol and vote. The 2022–23 data (Table 3) reflects the first year these measures were implemented which will set the baseline for ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement. Compliance measures (group member composition criteria and reach) were met, and the proportion of member recommendations adopted is high. The Advisory Group meeting attendance rate could be increased and this will be addressed in the next financial year.

Table 3: Advisory group effectiveness measures 2022–23

MEASURE	RESULT
Advisory Group meeting attendance rate	62%
Members have demonstrated reach with the relevant population group	Compliant
Group member composition criteria met (including lived experience, peak body, gender, geographic region, each part of the sector and intersectionality)	Met
Number of times that advisory group advice is sought (formally and informally) for VEC planning or implementation	17
Proportion of member recommendations adopted (in full or part) in VEC planning or implementation	100%

The 3 pieces of legislation that set out the VEC's primary responsibilities are the *Constitution Act 1975*, *Electoral Act 2002* and *Local Government Act 2020*.

In accordance with this legislation, the VEC conducts State Parliamentary elections, local government elections and by-elections, and certain statutory and fee-for-service elections. The VEC also provides advice to the Government and Parliament on electoral issues. Other legislation and regulations imposing certain duties on the Electoral Commissioner are listed in Appendix B.

Legislation

Electoral Act updates

Amendments to the *Electoral Act 2002* commenced on 1 June 2022. The changes clarified the political signage allowed near voting centres, introduced the role of a candidate's contact person for the VEC to provide advance notice in the case of a recount, aligned the period for allowing pre-processing for early and postal votes in a restricted area to commence from 10 hours before the close of voting (and scrutineers to observe the same), prevented a person or agency other than the VEC from distributing postal vote applications and removed outdated provisions in the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982*.

The VEC updated its templates, handbooks and instruction manuals and ensured relevant stakeholders were aware of the changes and had information necessary to meet new requirements.

Electoral Regulations 2022

On 30 August 2022, the Electoral Regulations 2022 (Regulations) were made to replace the sunsetted Electoral Regulations 2012. The Regulations updated and introduced new prescribed forms, simplified information into plain English, and removed outdated or unnecessary provisions.

The Regulations also provided the VEC with an ongoing power to expand access to electronic assisted voting during emergencies. When an emergency declaration is in force (which includes a national emergency, a state of disaster or a proclamation of emergency) the VEC may determine additional classes of electors eligible to access electronic assisted voting during a state election, for example if they are unable to travel to a voting centre because of the emergency.

The Regulations also temporarily expanded electronic assisted voting to voters who were subject to lawful requirement to isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19. The end of the public health orders on 12 October 2022 made the regulation defunct, and the VEC instead set up a dedicated drive-through voting service in Melton during the last 3 days of voting for the 2022 State election for those voters infected by COVID-19.

The Regulations were amended on 1 November 2022 in response to widespread flooding in Victoria shortly before the 2022 State election. The VEC worked closely with Emergency Management Victoria to identify flood-affected areas, and voters in these areas were able to access the VEC's telephone assisted voting service during the last week of voting. The temporary flood relief regulation was revoked on 1 May 2023.

Legal matters

The VEC's exercise of statutory powers is subject to judicial and merits review. As this was an election year the VEC was the respondent in 7 matters that progressed to the Courts. Four matters associated with the 2022 State election were brought before VCAT and 3 matters were brought before the Supreme Court of Victoria, including the Supreme Court sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns. The VEC was the applicant in one other civil matter in VCAT relating to the Merri-bek City Council election, which was not related to the State election.

Independence Party application for registration

Cumming v Victorian Electoral Commission [2022] VSC 671

Dr Catherine Cumming applied for the Independence Party to be registered in advance of the 2022 State election. The VEC refused this application because it could not independently verify the required 500 'eligible members'. Dr Cumming sought judicial review of this decision through the Supreme Court of Victoria, seeking that the VEC register the party. The Court found that the VEC had acted appropriately in verifying the number of members and rejected the application.

Election writs

Donohue v Gately [2022] VSC 758

The applicant asked for the election to be suspended because the VEC had not produced the writs for his inspection. The VEC published copies of the writs on its website and the application was dismissed.

Court of Disputed Returns

Vincent v Guy & Anor [2023] VSC 122

The VEC was the second respondent in a civil matter in the Court of Disputed Returns. An unsuccessful candidate for Bulleen District in the 2022 State election petitioned the Court of Disputed Returns to set aside the election of the successful candidate, Matthew Guy, on character grounds. The Court accepted that candidates are not subject to a test of character and dismissed the petition as an abuse of process.

How-to-vote card challenges

Ford v Victorian Electoral Commission [2023] VCAT 737

McQuestin v Victorian Electoral Commission [2023] VCAT 591

Naunton v Victorian Electoral Commission [2022] VCAT 1346

Torney v Victorian Electoral Commission [2022] VCAT 1337

In the 2022 State election the VEC registered 1,526 how-to-vote cards (HTVCs) out of 2,087 applications for registration. Any person may apply to VCAT for a review of the VEC's decision whether to register a HTVC. In the 2022 State election there were 4 challenges.

- ▶ The first 2 challenges concerned HTVCs that did not include a number in each box and the VEC rejected registration on the basis of blank boxes being likely to mislead or deceive voters to cast an informal vote. VCAT found that this was not a sufficient reason to refuse the HTVCs under the Electoral Act and the HTVCs were registered.
- ▶ The 2nd matter related to blank boxes and the use of the word 'Independent' next to the name of a candidate. The VEC had refused registration because of the concern that it was likely to mislead or deceive an elector into believing that the VEC endorsed the candidate's status as 'independent'. VCAT rejected this submission and the HTVC was registered.
- ▶ The 3rd matter involved a series of HTVCs lodged by the ALP and registered by the VEC. The applicant alleged that there were 2 defects and the VEC should have refused to register those HTVCs. The alleged defects were that the HTVCs improperly anonymised candidates and party names, and that the instructions to vote 'number at least 5 boxes' were likely to mislead or deceive electors in casting a vote. VCAT rejected the application and found that the HTVCs were not likely to mislead or deceive electors and upheld the VEC's decision to register them.
- ▶ The 4th matter involved a series of HTVCs which were printed in languages other than English. The VEC had refused to register these HTVCs because the application for registration did not include the required translations before the application timeframe closed. The applicant provided these translations before VCAT heard the matter and as a result VCAT ordered the HTVCs to be registered.

Governing legislation and tribunals cont.

2020 Merri-bek City Council, North-West Ward election

Victorian Electoral Commission v Yildiz [2023] VCAT 242

Following the October 2020 local government elections, the VEC applied to VCAT to review the declaration of the result of the Merri-bek (then Moreland) City Council, North-West Ward election. The application was prompted by concerns of possible postal voting fraud during the election. After a prolonged delay to hear the VEC's substantive application, VCAT Vice President Judge MacNamara presided over the substantive hearing of the application in February 2023.

VCAT found that former councillor Milad El-Halabi, who had been declared elected for North-West Ward by the election manager, was not duly elected. Mr El-Halabi had since resigned from Merri-bek City Council. VCAT accepted evidence submitted by the VEC that Mr El-Halabi was the principal beneficiary of the suspected fraudulent votes and that the election of the other 3 councillors for the North-West Ward was not affected by fraud. VCAT also affirmed the result of the March 2022 countback held to fill the extraordinary vacancy caused by Mr El-Halabi's resignation.

Independent review of Electoral Act amendments

An independent panel was appointed in May 2023 to review the 2018 amendments to the Electoral Act, including political donations, funding and electronic assisted voting. The VEC provided a detailed submission to the review, including 60 recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the systems being examined by the review.

The VEC will continue to contribute to the review before the panel's scheduled reports in November 2023 and February 2024.

Compliance and integrity support

Improving instruments and determinations

The standard of the VEC's legislative instruments, including determinations issued by the Electoral Commissioner, has been lifted. Determinations made by the Electoral Commissioner in 2022 and 2023 reflect improved quality, comprehensiveness and clarity as a result of the VEC's stronger focus on compliance and administrative governance. This has allowed for the VEC to clearly articulate and enforce its legislative powers, duties and functions to the public at a high standard.

The Electoral Commissioner issued 11 determinations in 2022–23, including determinations on the authorisation of electoral campaign material; scrutineering at an election; campaigning at voting centres; verifying the identity of an elector applying to vote by post; and reasons and excuses for failing to vote in an election. The Electoral Commissioner also made a temporary determination in November 2022 to enable flood-affected Victorians to access electronic assisted voting at the 2022 State election.

All determinations are published on the VEC website.

Uplifting policies

The VEC completed internal reviews on a number of key policies in advance of the 2022 State election to ensure key procedures were able to be clearly understood and applied by all stakeholders. These included:

Political disclosures

Under section 17A of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC can lawfully discriminate in offering employment or appointment on the basis of a person's political belief or activity. In July 2022, the VEC issued new guidelines setting out the process to be followed and criteria to be applied in discriminating based on political activity. These guidelines were issued following a comprehensive review of the guidelines issued in 2011 and their efficacy and impact. The new guidelines balanced the VEC's need for strong actual and perceived impartiality against crucial staffing and capability challenges.

Appointments

Section 18 of the *Electoral Act 2002* provides the power for the Commission to appoint election managers and election officials. Policies, procedures and appointment templates were improved to better manage the appointment of tens of thousands of election staff across the State.

Recounts

In anticipation of recount requests for the 2022 State election, the VEC refined and streamlined its recount request management policies and procedures. This included setting clearer protocols for assessing and responding to requests for recounts. Given the short declaration timeline, this work focused on ensuring requests for recounts were identified quickly so that they could be considered and actioned within the legislative timeframes.

Recount requests

Prior to any declaration of election, a recount under section 120 of the *Electoral Act* may be conducted at the election manager's discretion, or on the request of a candidate specifying reasons, or if directed by VEC.

Requests for recounts were received from candidates for the districts of Hastings, Mulgrave and Preston, and for the North-Eastern Metropolitan, South-Eastern Metropolitan and Western Metropolitan regions.

No recounts were conducted. Reasons for refusal were provided to each requesting candidate. Reasons for refusal included:

- ▶ the stated grounds did not sufficiently demonstrate that a re-examination of ballot papers could alter the outcome of the election
- ▶ the stated grounds did not sufficiently demonstrate that a recount provided an appropriate process to rectify or resolve the concerns raised
- ▶ the request did not provide sufficient detail about any errors identified or observed in the counting or processing of votes that would overcome the margins involved with the election
- ▶ the grounds for the request identified policy issues that, if shown to be true, could not be resolved or rectified through a recount
- ▶ the VEC was unable to ascertain whether the stated grounds for the recount were sufficiently relevant to the process, system or procedures of the count.

Revised instruments of delegation

The VEC revised its delegation instrument to create separate instruments of statutory and operational delegations in order to improve oversight and compliance with statutory and corporate governance responsibilities. The VEC's statutory powers, duties and functions under Victorian legislation are delegated in the new instrument to relevant VEC staff, both VPS and those appointed under the *Electoral Act 2002*. The new instruments also allow for temporary statutory delegations to be easily configured for specific election events, such as the 2022 State election and the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election.

Partnerships

VGSO partnership during the 2022 State election

In previous elections, accessing timely legal services during the election period can be difficult and the costs unpredictable. For the State election, the VEC partnered with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO) to secure access to legal assistance across the broad and diverse areas of law relevant to an election. The VGSO also seconded a Lead Counsel and a solicitor on a full-time basis for the early voting period and on election day at a fixed cost of \$40,000 (excluding GST).

The VGSO provided timely legal advice and legal assistance on short notice in a range of matters during the election period, including:

- ▶ responses to poor behaviour at early voting centres
- ▶ advice and representation at VCAT hearings relating to the registration of how-to-vote cards
- ▶ advice and representation in relation to applications for judicial review
- ▶ advice and representation in relation to a Court of Disputed Returns matter.

In addition to the VGSO partnership for the 2022 State election, the VEC continued to maintain relationships with other providers listed on the State Government's legal services panel to leverage their strengths in different areas of law.

Governing legislation and tribunals cont.

Internal integrity partnerships

Strengthening electoral integrity management through strategic partnerships between electoral functions continues to be a focus. The VEC undertook a wide review of its policies, procedures and instructional products for legislative compliance, including newly amended legislation. The review program brought together policy and regulation staff, electoral function leads and communication staff to ensure compliance obligations were easier to identify and understand.

Electoral integrity framework

Electoral integrity is managed by delivering services, tools and resources to enable democratic participation. The VEC plays a critical role in building trust in the electoral system, by delivering its services and functions with integrity. This year, the VEC developed an electoral integrity framework. The framework provides a conceptual explanation of electoral integrity and outlines how the VEC contributes to electoral integrity in Victoria.

The VEC will publish the Electoral Integrity Framework in the coming reporting year, as part of the VEC's response to a contemporary electoral climate where trust in democratic bodies is declining. The framework encourages all Victorians to understand the range of practices the VEC undertakes to support electoral integrity, and the measures the VEC uses to monitor and respond to electoral integrity issues.

The framework was developed with support from a broad range of stakeholders, including other electoral commissions from across Australia.

The VEC has legislative and organisational processes in place to ensure transparency and accountability to the Victorian public. These processes include internal and external auditing, regular reporting to stakeholders including Parliament, Government and the public, and tabling of audited financial statements as part of this report.

Audit and Risk Committee

The VEC's Audit and Risk Committee assists and advises the Electoral Commissioner in meeting financial compliance and reporting obligations, and in managing risk. The Committee consists of the following members:

- ▶ David Nairn, Chair (independent member – concluded 27 April 2023)
- ▶ Taryn Rulton, Chair (independent member – appointed Chair June 2023)
- ▶ Kerrie Howard (independent member)
- ▶ Stephen Helberg (independent member – commenced June 2023)

The responsibilities of the Committee are to monitor and oversee the:

- ▶ financial performance and reporting process, including the annual financial statements
- ▶ scope of work, performance and independence of internal audits
- ▶ engagement and management of the internal audit contractor
- ▶ scope of work, independence and performance of the external auditor
- ▶ operation and implementation of the risk management framework
- ▶ matters of accountability and internal control affecting VEC operations
- ▶ effectiveness of management information systems and other systems of internal control
- ▶ VEC's process for monitoring compliance with laws and regulations and its own code of conduct and code of financial practice
- ▶ VEC's compliance with the Financial Management Compliance Framework (FMCF) Standing Directions.

The Committee met formally on 4 occasions during the year. The Committee's positive support and guidance to the Electoral Commissioner was valuable with its focus again on risk, compliance and business continuity.

Customer feedback and complaints

The VEC handles complaints in three main areas:

- ▶ complaints alleging a breach of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) ('Electoral Act')
- ▶ complaints alleging a breach of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) ('LG Act')
- ▶ complaints about a process, policy, product or service related to an interaction with the VEC

Table 4: Submissions to the VEC customer feedback team by type, excluding election periods

TYPE OF SUBMISSION	NUMBER OF SUBMISSION TYPE
Complaint	387
Enquiry	166
Other feedback	69
Allegation	31
Report	1
Total submissions	654

Accountability and transparency cont.

Table 5: Complaints by most common category, excluding election periods

CATEGORY OF COMPLAINT	FREQUENCY
Authorisation of election material	32
Fine for non-voting	32
Misleading or deceiving election advertising	32
Other	28
Conduct of candidate or party	25
Information privacy	23
Material from prospective candidates / early campaigning	19

A total of 3,341 written complaints and feedback submissions were received in 2022–23. As this financial year was a state election year, a large majority of the complaints and feedback submissions related to the State election – 2,675 in total, with a further 12 relating to the Narracan supplementary election. This chapter provides a breakdown of these contacts by frequency and type excluding the State and supplementary election periods, for comparison with non-election years. The number of submissions which were received outside the State and supplementary election periods in 2022–23 is higher than the number of complaints received during the previous financial year (508) and previous State election year in 2018–19 (921).

The election-related feedback and complaints are broken down in more detail in Table 12 as part of the discussion of the State election. This will also be discussed in the VEC’s report to parliament on the conduct of the State election which will be tabled on 31 October 2023.

The VEC also received submissions outside any election period. The main themes were advertising and election material (164); VEC administration or processes (117); compulsory voting (68); enrolment (60); and candidates and parties (45).

There were also 120 submissions about information privacy, the majority of which (91) were received during the 2022 State election. The VEC reminded concerned electors of its obligations under the Electoral Act to provide candidates, political parties and Members of Parliament with enrolment information.

All submissions were dealt with in accordance with VEC procedures. Complaints were resolved through providing information and responsive action where required. The VEC is committed to responding to complaints and feedback submissions within 5 working days. The average response time was 2.8 working days.

As the VEC does not have authority to follow up allegations of a breach of the LG Act, these complaints are forwarded to the Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) for handling, in accordance with an established protocol. In 2022–23, 2 complaints were forwarded to the LGI.

The use of submission methods was similar to previous years with 72% of the complaints and feedback submissions received during 2022–23 submitted online, while 27% were received via email. Only a small number of submissions (<1%) were received by post.

Customer Service Charter

Strong and reliable customer service is integral to meeting the needs of those the VEC serves. The Customer Service Charter outlines what customers can expect and how the VEC ensures its services are responsive, professional, inclusive and accessible for all. The Charter confirms the VEC’s commitment to helping the wider community understand the role of the VEC and the role voters play in the election process.

The Charter also outlines the VEC’s commitment to evaluation of stakeholder satisfaction, and the ongoing review of our processes, policies and systems with a focus on maintaining privacy.

The Charter is reviewed regularly and is available on the VEC’s website.

Corporate reporting

A comprehensive program of stakeholder reporting supports the VEC's goals of accountability and transparency. Internal reporting is aligned with functional areas of authority and cross-functional projects and programs.

External reporting is based on legislative and governance obligations, transparency objectives and commitments to stakeholders. The standard of reporting is high. For example, last year's Annual Report fully complied with the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) model report requirements and achieved a Gold award at the 2023 Australasian Reporting Awards.

During 2022–23, the VEC tabled one report in Parliament: the *Victorian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2021–22*.

Other reporting obligations include:

- ▶ reporting to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) in relation to budgetary objectives
- ▶ monthly financial reporting to DTF
- ▶ annual attestation on compliance with the Financial Management Compliance Framework (FMCF) requirements to various stakeholders including DTF, DPC, responsible Minister, VAGO
- ▶ twice-yearly reporting to the Attorney-General on infringements activity
- ▶ advertising campaign reporting
- ▶ reporting for the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC), for which the VEC provides secretariat services and technical support. The VEC also prepares an annual report for the EBC. This report can be found at Appendix I on page 167.
- ▶ annual attestation to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, on the progress of activities identified in the VEC Protective Data Security Plan (PDSP)
- ▶ annual report to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner on the number and outcomes of freedom of information requests.

All reports were delivered on schedule and within budget, where applicable. Annual reports and other reports and publications are available on the VEC website and from the VEC's head office.

Gender Equality Act Reporting

Gender Equality is reported and audited in line with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. A Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) was developed in 2021–22 in consultation with staff, union representatives and the Executive Management Group. It provides long-range actions and initiatives to support, engage and improve gender equality across the VEC. In 2022–23 a GEAP committee was established to assist with the creation of specific actions to meet VEC targets. Work is progressing on specific initiatives for delivery in 2023–24.

Financial Management Compliance Framework

The Financial Management Compliance Framework (FMCF) assures the Minister for Finance that appropriate systems and controls have been implemented to ensure compliance with good financial management practices. The FMCF provides for effective, efficient and responsible financial management of public resources.

The FMCF Standing Directions cover:

- ▶ financial code of conduct, financial governance including the establishment of an Audit and Risk Committee, financial risk management, delegations, and internal and external audits
- ▶ financial management structure, systems, policies and procedures. This includes roles and responsibilities of the financial management team and identified key management personnel, managing outsourced services, information technology management, operations, development and change, and education and training
- ▶ financial management reporting, which includes internal and external reporting, financial statements and reports of operations, performance management and evaluation, financial management compliance obligations, tax compliance, purchasing cards, and thefts and losses compliance.

The VEC's compliance with the FMCF Standing Directions is assessed by the VEC's appointed internal auditor annually and is reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee. In 2022–23 the VEC was assessed as compliant with the FMCF standards.

Accountability and transparency cont.

Identifying and managing risk

The Victorian Government's Risk Management Framework provides the minimum standard for risk governance across public sector entities. As the Accountable Officer, the Electoral Commissioner is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the Framework to ensure risks are identified and managed consistently across the organisation.

Risk management is embedded in the VEC's operations. This is evident through regular workshops and assessments that identify and monitor organisational risks and allows for risk controls to be evaluated and new controls developed where required. The VEC's risk practice is managed through an integrated enterprise risk system, with regular reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee, which oversees risk management and provides an independent perspective on the VEC's practices.

Risks are profiled and rated according to the potential hazard they pose to strategic and operational activities. The Audit and Risk Committee independently assesses and determines whether risks are adequately scoped, and whether sufficient controls are in place to mitigate and manage risks.

The VEC has comprehensive risk management plans for all electoral events and major projects. These are developed, discussed and analysed at branch level and at election planning groups during the planning and delivery phase. Areas covered include election management, infrastructure, communication, recruitment and information technology.

Internal audit

The internal audit program is designed to provide an independent, objective assurance to the Electoral Commissioner of our management of key risks and operational functions. It is reviewed annually and designed in consultation with the Audit and Risk Committee and the EMG.

The rolling 4-year program is comprehensive and enables effective and regular review of all operational, financial and related activities. The program includes annual attestations and certifications, such as Risk and Fraud Certification and compliance with Memorandums of Understanding agreed with other agencies.

In addition to standing items, internal audits this year covered a comprehensive review of past recommendations and attestation assessments including risk control environment. The audits each revealed matters and recommendations of medium-to-low risk to the VEC and appropriate management actions have been identified and delivered in response.

The VEC will initiate a tender process in 2023 to appoint a new internal audit service provider, with the current engagement with Protiviti scheduled to conclude in August.

Disclosures

Advertising disclosure

FRD 22 issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board requires Victorian Government agencies to disclose advertising expenditure on campaigns with a media spend of \$100,000 or greater. The VEC had one disclosure in this category for this financial year.

Advertising campaign name: 2022 State election

Start and end date of campaign: 15 August 2022 to 17 December 2022

Campaign summary: A multi-channel statewide advertising campaign to raise awareness among eligible Victorian electors of the mandatory requirement to be correctly enrolled and vote in the 2022 State election. It also incorporated digital literacy messaging as recommended by the Electoral Matters Committee's *Inquiry into the impact of social media on Victorian elections and Victoria's electoral administration* (September 2021).

Details of campaign expenditure (excluding GST)

- ▶ Advertising (media): \$4,150,168
- ▶ Creative and campaign development: \$1,235,704
- ▶ Research and evaluation: \$8,000
- ▶ Print and other collateral: incorporated into advertising (media) buy
- ▶ Other campaign costs: N/A

Attestation to Public Sector Standards Commissioner

The Electoral Commissioner completed an annual attestation of hospitality and gifts as required.

Building Act 1993

The VEC does not own or control any Government buildings and, consequently, is exempt from notifying compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*.

Child Safe Standards

In 2015, the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005* was amended to include Child Safe Standards for all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria.

The Commission for Children and Young People determined that the VEC is required to comply with the Child Safe Standards, primarily due to its work in student civics education. Throughout 2022–23, the VEC has continued to support the application of the Child Safety Standards across the breadth of the work conducted.

The VEC's policies and procedures, position descriptions, advertising, recruitment and training procedures reflect the VEC's strong position on and in support of Child Safe Standards.

Consultancies and contracts

Major contracts

In accordance with the requirements of FRD 12, the VEC disclosed all contracts greater than \$10 million in value entered into during the year ended 30 June 2023. No contracts greater than \$10 million in value were entered into by the VEC during 2022–23.

Consultancy expenditure

Details of consultancies under \$10,000

In 2022–23, 21 consultancies were engaged where the total fees payable to the individual consultants was less than \$10,000. The total expenditure incurred during 2022–23 in relation to these consultancies was \$76,158 (excluding GST).

Details of consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

In 2022–23, there were 30 consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants was \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred during 2022–23 in relation to these consultancies was \$7,639,937 (excluding GST). See Table 6.

Disability Act 2006

The *Disability Act 2006* requires all public sector bodies to prepare a disability action plan and all departments to report on the implementation of their disability action plan in their annual report. The VEC's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan was developed and launched in 2019. The VEC provided a report on its progress with deliverables to the EAAG. See 'Disability Access and Inclusion Plan' for more information.

Disclosures cont.

Disclosure index

The Annual Report of the VEC is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation and pronouncements. A disclosure index has been prepared to facilitate identification of the VEC's compliance with statutory disclosure requirements. The disclosure index is included as Appendix A.

Employment and conduct principles

The VEC maintains and implements a suite of policies and guidelines with respect to upholding public sector conduct, managing and valuing diversity, employment, managing underperformance, reviewing personal grievances, and selecting on merit.

Table 6: Details of consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

CONSULTANT	PURPOSE OF CONSULTANCY	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT FEE (EX GST)	EXPENDITURE 2022-23 (EX GST)	FIXTURE EXPENDITURE (EX GST)
Clayton Utz	Legal advisory services	74,201	58,566	15,635
Convo Communications Australia P/L	Video remote interpreting services	23,127	23,127	-
Deloitte Consulting Pty Ltd	Website strategy and design	185,108	185,108	-
Dr Dominic Yong	Specialist medical advice	12,875	12,875	-
Emma Savage Consulting	EIR - Retention on disposal authority (RDA) variation	16,856	14,000	2,856
Explainmate!	Production of 2022 State election explainer animation videos	49,150	49,150	-
Frank Vincent	Electoral Representation Advisory Panel member fee	80,046	12,666	67,381
Great Migrations - Overseas Ac	RMS Tech Migration Project - Application Assessment	15,168	15,168	-
Herbert Smith Freehills	Legal advisory services	20,415	20,415	-
ID (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd	Demographic Services - Elector forecasts	214,000	214,000	-
iSentia Pty Ltd	Advertising - media services	105,920	105,920	-
Jones Lang LaSalle Corporate (VIC)	Hub acquisitions and lease renewals	83,000	83,000	-
Julie Eisenbise	Electoral Representation Advisory Panel member fee	84,100	26,634	57,466
Kantar Public Australia Pty Ltd	State Election Services Evaluation	106,737	106,737	-
KPMG Forensic Pty Ltd	Forensic audit/investigation support	76,776	76,776	-

CONSULTANT	PURPOSE OF CONSULTANCY	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT FEE (EX GST)	EXPENDITURE 2022-23 (EX GST)	FIXTURE EXPENDITURE (EX GST)
Leba Advertising (Aust) Pty Ltd	CALD Media release translation and production services	46,450	46,450	-
Maddocks and FOI Assist Workshop	Legal advice on ballot paper printing contract	14,977	14,977	-
MANIQ P/L T/A Documents in Dispute	Expert document examination	55,730	55,730	-
Opal Translation T/as Ethnolink	Multicultural Market Research	29,347	29,347	-
Optimum Media Direction - OMD	Advertising - media buy	5,121,657	4,543,396	578,261
Oracle Customer Management Solution	Public Enquiry System	1,024,675	1,024,675	-
Pesel & Carr	Reputation management consultancy	16,925	16,925	-
PP&E Valuations Pty Ltd	Asset revaluation May 2023	19,540	19,540	-
Protiviti Pty Ltd	Internal audit	69,386	69,386	-
Saatchi & Saatchi Australia Pty Ltd	State Election 2022 Advertising Campaign	512,291	512,291	-
SACS Consulting Pty Ltd	Strategy 2027 - development of draft strategic plan	112,593	110,930	1,663
Secmon1 Pty Ltd	Digital forensics	74,652	74,652	-
The LOTE Agency	Video subtitling and translation management project	11,290	11,290	-
This is My Life	Photography and in language videos for the 2022 State election	70,507	70,507	-
Votar Partners	Knowledge management framework	35,700	35,700	-

Environmental performance

The VEC has continued its commitment to reducing the negative impact of its operations on the environment, with ongoing communication and information programs to encourage positive behavioural changes.

The VEC's Environmental Sustainability Report for 2022-23 is included in 'Our organisation'.

Executive officer disclosures

The Electoral Commissioner and Deputy Electoral Commissioner are appointed by the Governor in Council as statutory office holders. These appointments do not fall within the definition of Executive Officer under the *Public Administration Act 2004*; therefore, disclosures were not necessary.

Disclosures cont.

Freedom of information

The FOI Act gives the community the right to access information in the possession of the VEC. Of the 277 requests received by the VEC under the FOI Act during 2022–23, 177 were satisfied outside of the process. Seven requests were for documents relating to the 2022 State election, while 2 requests were for documents relating to previous elections.

There was a 145% increase in the number of FOI requests received in 2022–23 compared to 2021–22. As well as the increase in the volume of requests, there was also a substantial increase in the size and complexity of the requests.

In processing these requests, the VEC complied with all of its obligations under the FOI Act and the accompanying Professional Standards. Information about how to lodge an application under the FOI Act is available on the VEC website or in Appendix E.

Gifts, benefits and hospitality register

In complying with Victorian Public Sector Commission standards for Victorian public sector (VPS) employees on the giving and receiving of gifts, the VEC publishes its gifts, benefits and hospitality register on a quarterly basis. These reports are available on the VEC website.

Grants and transfer payments (other than contributions by owners)

Included in the 'Total expenses from transactions' are payments of grants and assistance to certain companies and organisations. During 2022–23, the VEC provided grants totalling \$193,306 to 6 organisations (see Table 7).

Table 7: Grants to external bodies, 2022–23

ORGANISATION	PURPOSE OF GRANT	AMOUNT (EX GST)
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Sponsorship of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's (VMC) calendar of events	22,000
Richmond Football Club	Support for the Richmond Emerging Aboriginal Leaders (REAL) program coordinated by the Korin Gamadji Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to build their leadership skills through active citizenship and position them as role models within their community	58,335
University of Melbourne	Development of Electoral Law Library and ongoing support of Electoral Regulation Research Network (ERRN) Sponsorship	58,608
Victorian Student Representative Council	Partnership Sponsorship Package for two 2022 annual student voice/active citizenship events	10,000
YMCA Victoria	6 teams to participate in the 2023 Youth Parliament	30,955
Youth Affairs Council of Victoria	Sponsorship of Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) website – Democracy content and event launch	13,409
Total		\$193,306

Information and records management

The VEC has responsibility for managing information in accordance with standards issued by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) and the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC). The types of information managed by the VEC are in the VEC Information Asset Register.

During 2022–23 the VEC:

- ▶ used SharePoint and HPE Records Manager to manage electronic and hardcopy records
- ▶ implemented the VEC Records Digitisation Plan 2022–26, and digitised one set of permanent records
- ▶ used business impact levels, privacy impact and security risk assessments to make good information management decisions in relation to managing and releasing information
- ▶ met reporting obligations imposed by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*.

Disclosure of ICT expenditure

The VEC had an ICT business as usual expenditure in the reporting period of \$15,138,228 and an operational expenditure of \$8,198,626 as well as capital expenditure of \$4,077,610. Large amount of ICT costs incurred this financial period relate to State election IT infrastructure, systems and cyber security management.

National Competition Policy

Competitive neutrality requires Government businesses to ensure that, where services compete with another Government business or, potentially, with the private sector, any advantage arising solely from their government ownership be removed if it is not in the public interest. Government businesses are required to cost and price these services as if they were privately owned and, thus, the services must be fully cost reflective.

Competitive neutrality policy provides Government businesses with a tool to enhance decisions on resource allocation. This policy does not override other policy objectives of Government and focuses on efficiency in the provision of service. The VEC continues to comply with the requirements of the National Competition Policy.

Table 8: ICT expenditure in 2022–2023

ALL OPERATIONAL ICT EXPENDITURE		ICT EXPENDITURE RELATED TO PROJECTS TO CREATE OR ENHANCE ICT CAPABILITIES	
BUSINESS AS USUAL ICT EXPENDITURE	NON BUSINESS AS USUAL ICT EXPENDITURE	OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE	CAPITAL EXPENDITURE
(Total)	(Total = Operational expenditure and capital expenditure)		
\$15,138,228	\$12,276,236	\$8,198,626	\$4,077,610

Disclosures cont.

Occupational health and safety management

The goal of the VEC's occupational health and safety (OHS) system is to ensure all staff remain safe and healthy at work. An OHS management system is in place and VEC branches have implemented local OHS action plans aimed at enhancing safety performance and ensuring safe systems of work.

In 2022-23, there were 609 days lost as a result of workplace injury. For more on human resource management at the VEC, including performance against OHS management measures, see the 'Our People' section of this report.

Pecuniary interest declarations

The Electoral Commissioner and the Deputy Electoral Commissioner completed declarations of pecuniary interests as required.

Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012

The VEC is committed to the aims and objectives of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* (PID Act), previously the *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*. Improper conduct by its employees, officers or members is not tolerated, nor is reprisal against those who come forward to disclose such conduct.

The VEC recognises the value of transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, conduct involving a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety or the environment. For details about reporting procedures under the PID Act, see Appendix D.

Victorian Industry Participation Policy

The *Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003* requires public bodies and departments to report on the implementation of the Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPPP). Departments and public bodies are required to apply VIPPP in all tenders over \$3 million in metropolitan Melbourne and \$1 million in regional Victoria. No contracts to which the VIPPP applies were commenced or completed by the VEC during 2022-23.

Additional information available on request

Information relating to the 2022-23 reporting period is made available to Ministers, Members of Parliament and the public on request (subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act)) and is listed in Appendix C.

Major projects

Significant development work was completed prior to the State election. Most notably this included the culmination of a multi-year upgrade of the organisation's Election Management System.

This work was undertaken through a range of discrete projects prioritising customer focus, improving functionality, and support for new and amended legislation. It also enhanced business process optimisation, legacy data migration, security and performance.

Enhancements included:

- ▶ updates to the *Check My Enrolment* online application to facilitate self-service for prospective voters to confirm or update their address details, and check their district and region
- ▶ updates to modernise the *Voting Centre Locator*, used by millions of voters in early voting and on election day, to be mobile-native, responsive and able to scale to millions of 'hits'
- ▶ enhancements to the module used to support analysis and management of compulsory voting – including historical data
- ▶ development of a centralised helpdesk system to coordinate and manage election offices across the state during peak election periods, including responses to disasters such as floods and fires
- ▶ updates to the VEC website election results display and related secure media feeds, as well as data analytics and reporting to manage service and activities at VEC sites throughout the election period (through to the return of the writ).

A separate project involved a *Roll Lookup* application for use with low-cost handheld tablet devices, providing a searchable roll lookup option used in most larger voting centres (with staff roaming queues assisting voters). This initiative aimed to improve the overall voting experience and reduce delays. The application was also utilised during visits to aged care facilities to facilitate enrolment checks and registrations to support specialised mobile voting services.

Service improvements

Cyber security

Compliance with data security standards is maintained via updated IT security policies and mandatory cyber training for all staff. The VEC also maintains ongoing partnerships with relevant federal and state agencies.

The VEC has conducted internal system stress testing and regular external security assessments on key services and applications to enhance resilience against potential cyber threats. Additionally, the VEC has implemented measures like Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) protection and has implemented ASD Essential 8 controls, as well as a range of other related security initiatives. Heightened security measures are also deployed through critical election periods.

Significant investments in cyber and information security have been made over the period. This includes transitioning to a range of advanced security controls including modern identity and access management solutions, as well as engaging specialised engineering support to optimise network security.

Overall, the VEC's approach is designed to provide leading information security measures, with a high base level of assurance, which is further strengthened throughout major elections.

Platforms

VEC applications and services are operated from secure cloud facilities located within Australia. Security, resilience, performance and disaster recovery have been achieved through the use of in-built and optional redundancy across multiple data centres, multiple regions, high availability, and real-time geo-replication of infrastructure, data and backups. By utilising highly scalable modern commercial platforms with Australian government and global security certifications, the VEC can efficiently and effectively scale up its election systems to support critical election periods (and peak external and internal demand). VEC platforms are supported with extensive monitoring, logging and alerting capabilities. This ensures that election systems and platforms are scalable, optimised and highly available to accommodate critical election events, while supporting sustainability outside election periods.

Information Technology cont.

Enhancements include:

- ▶ migration to modern and secure software-defined networking platforms for VEC core and election networks, which improves agility and security as well as voter and staff experience
- ▶ foundational works for modern workplace technologies based on Microsoft 365, which supports increased productivity and access to modern desktop software, collaboration and productivity tools.

Planning

The VEC’s IT Strategy will be reviewed in the 2023–24 financial year to support and underpin Strategy 2027. The core objectives will be based on people, technology, customer relationship and innovation. The strategy’s focus lies in human-centred design, intelligent automation and the implementation of modern technology to support a modern workplace, while strengthening the resilience and security of applications and systems provided by the VEC.

Our Intents

 <p>Human Centered Design</p>	<p>Put real users at the centre of service design and implementation process. Deliver product and services that resonate and are tailored to user’s needs.</p>
 <p>Intelligent automation</p>	<p>Improve efficiency, productivity, quality of services, employee and customer satisfaction through intelligent automation of processes.</p>
 <p>Modern technology</p>	<p>Remove complexity, optimise, rationalise and modernise outdated services, integrate applications and platforms. Provide modern technology that is Cloud native, fit for purpose, highly available, scalable and customer centric.</p>
 <p>Modern workplace</p>	<p>Creating a technology suite suited to the modern worker that recognises digital collaboration, flexibility and the ability to work securely from anywhere, on any device are key components for driving employee productivity, efficiency, engagement and satisfaction.</p>
 <p>Resilience and security</p>	<p>Increase the capability to adapt in the face of new and emerging cyber security threats. Strengthen ability to prevent, detect, respond and recover from cyber security incidents including disasters.</p>

Warehouse

Warehousing and distribution facilities play a key role in supporting the core business of the VEC and ensure a high level of operational readiness is maintained. As the VEC entered another major election cycle, the focus of warehouse operations was the preparation, deployment and return of resources from election venues across the State and the provision of logistical support for the 2022 State election.

Activities undertaken by staff at the VEC warehouse this year focused on the 2022 State election and included:

- ▶ establishment and ongoing management and support of all transport delivery and collection schedules
- ▶ the delivery, transfer and collection of approximately 4,500 pallets of election resources and materials to over 176 election venues and support locations
- ▶ delivery and collection of approximately 2,000 pallets of voting centre cardboard to all 1,765 voting centre locations
- ▶ dispatch of 800 skids of blank ballot paper stock to 2 print sites (Victoria and New South Wales)
- ▶ transfer of all printed ballot papers (9,650,180) from print site locations to election support venues, including early voting centres, election offices, voting centres, hubs and the centralised activity site
- ▶ sorting of approximately 8,000 pallets of returned election office equipment, stationery, forms and envelopes including COVID resources
- ▶ facilitating the secure storage of 463 pallets of sealed parcels of election records returned from the State election
- ▶ an annual stocktake of election resources and equipment stored at the warehouse.

The outlook for 2023–24 is largely focused on the maintenance of equipment and preparation and planning for the 2024 local government elections. Activities will include:

- ▶ review of resource stock levels to support operations at election venues for the 2024 local government elections
- ▶ ordering, receipt and storage of resources with a focus on long production lead times, such as ballot paper stock, envelopes, forms and cardboard products (approximately 2,500 pallets)
- ▶ servicing and maintenance of equipment, purchase of replacement resource items where required
- ▶ inspection and maintenance of over 5,000 electrical items including electrical safety checks and the 'test and tag' of equipment, cables and power boards
- ▶ detailed logistical planning for the delivery, transfer and collection of election resources and materials for the 2024 local government elections
- ▶ preparation of 180 election office stationery kits, 500 voting centre kits and 50 office equipment cages for upcoming elections, including local government elections in 2024
- ▶ Secure destruction of approximately 3,800 records.



CAITLIN JEDSKI

Title: Print and Design Production Manager
Branch: Elections Branch

“Everyone really went above and beyond to support each other and make sure that the project would be successful”

SPOTLIGHT ON...

How does your role promote the vision of the VEC?

The VEC’s vision is all Victorians actively participating in their democracy. Election services are facilitated by a vast number of products, which my team are responsible for delivering. This includes ballot papers, instructional products and forms. My role contributes towards this vision by continually challenging how these products can be improved by design, and evaluating how they can best support the user’s needs.

What makes the VEC an innovative and engaging place to work?

As a designer, it’s not always easy to find work that feels meaningful. Often, you’re focused on an incredibly narrow target audience with a very particular goal in mind. There is so much potential to improve the voting experience through our product design. Whether it’s for election staff conducting the process ‘backstage’, or for the Victorian public, design has a profound ability to shape how we interact with services and experiences. Whether we are looking to solve a particular user experience problem or optimise efficiency from a production standpoint, it’s easy to feel connected to the impact of our work.

What was a key lesson you learned from working on the 2022 State election?

If I were to take a positive away it would be that, beyond being skilled, having a dedicated team that cares about the work is everything. The tight collaboration between the project team was incredible. Even when we were faced with challenging scenarios, everyone really went above and beyond to support each other and make sure that the project would be successful. This was something that wasn’t necessarily modeled in a process or procedure but a result of working together so tightly during planning.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I’m also a design nerd outside of work! When I have time, I will often run self-initiated projects, or read up on different subjects, to explore different concepts or mediums that may inform my practice. I do have other hobbies though; I love martial arts (although I’m currently out of practice) and I’m a recent ‘dog mum’, so I spend a lot of time out walking and at the beach.

Our core business

ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-23



Successful delivery of the 2022 State Election.



Delivered 3 local government by-elections, 6 fee-for-service elections and polls and 11 local government countbacks.



Enhanced the Check My Enrolment online tool to make it easier for electors to check their enrolment details.



Expanded the VEC's dedicated electoral compliance capability and specialised electoral compliance team.



Delivered new state election results functionality for the VEC website.



Successfully piloted the VEC's own online research panel to embed the voice of the voter into service and communication design.



Significant enhancements to the VEC disclosures system improving capability and functionality.



Robust management of the continued COVID-19 complexities on VEC electoral services.



Prepared and delivered the election reports and invoices for the South Gippsland Shire Council general election and the 3 by-elections by June 2022.

OUTLOOK 2023-24



Delivering the Local Government elections in 2024 and the Warrandyte district by-election in 2023.



Implementing new local government electoral structures and ward boundaries across VEC systems ahead of the 2024 local government elections.



Delivering redevelopment of the Roll Management System.



Progression of an academic study into voting informality with the University of Adelaide and Flinders University – to be published in 2025.



Implementing the VEC Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

Electoral activity

The Victorian State election was not the only electoral event delivered over the past year. A further 21 electoral events were conducted including 9 countbacks and 1 by-election as a direct result of councillors being elected to State Parliament. A State Supplementary election was also delivered for Narracan District due to the death of a candidate between closing of nominations and election day.

All events were successfully conducted as scheduled with no result overturned.

The details of all election activity conducted during 2022–23 are included in Table 13 and Table 14 on page 62.

2022 State election

This section provides a brief overview of the 2022 State election. The VEC’s Report to Parliament on the 2022 State election provides an in-depth description and analysis of the election. This report can be found on the VEC’s website and is on the list of tabled reports on the Victorian Parliament website.

A number of significant legislative changes preceded the 2022 State election, including the introduction of the state’s new funding and political donation disclosure laws, restrictions on signs near voting centres, and allowing all electors to access early voting without having a specific reason for doing so.

Enrolment and turnout

There were 4,394,465 people enrolled to vote at the 2022 State election – the highest number ever enrolled. However, although more Victorians voted in the 2022 State election than at any previous state election, voter turnout has declined again, down to 88.03% inclusive of the Narracan district supplementary election. Part of this is due to the VEC’s success in enrolling people, which results in more people on the roll who decide not to vote, with an estimated 97.8% of eligible Victorians now on the roll and large numbers of Victorians travelling overseas, and low participation by young adults as can be seen in Figure 8.

Communication services

During the 2022 election the VEC communicated with electors through advertising, social media, the VEC website, the digital VoterAlert system, and the published *EasyVote Guide* and *Easy English Guide*. The VEC also provided a Public Enquiry Service for electors to call for information.

Services to candidates and registered political parties

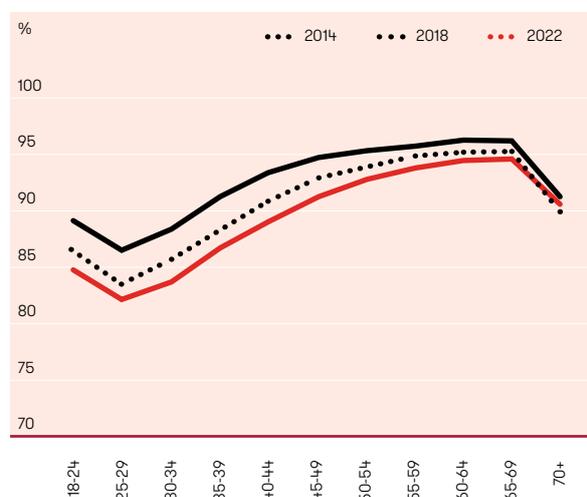
Twenty-three registered political parties contested the 2022 State election. There was keen interest in party registration in the lead-up to the election, with applications for registration from 18 new political parties, 9 of which successfully registered in time for the election.

A total of 1,194 candidates contested the election – 1,065 candidates endorsed by RPPs and 129 independents. This represents a significantly larger overall number of candidates (compared to 887 in 2018) with a slight increase in the number of independents.

Media services

The VEC held media briefings, distributed media handbooks, created a dedicated media centre on the VEC website, and conducted 50 media interviews (TV and radio). The VEC also produced 57 statewide media releases and responded to 460 media queries. For further information on media activity see the Communication services section on page 90.

Figure 8: Voter turnout by age group



Education and inclusion services

The VEC’s Education and Inclusion Services Program delivers initiatives aimed at communities facing barriers to electoral participation, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people experiencing homelessness, people in prisons, people living with disability, and young people. The foundation program for the 2022 State election featured peer-based information delivery through the Be Heard! Democracy Ambassador Program. The VEC trained 99 and recruited 73 Democracy Ambassadors from target communities and reached 7,105 participants across 228 outreach sessions.

Staffing

The VEC’s temporary election workforce comprises 22,753 separate roles, with many of these roles operating on election day only. This requires an extraordinary recruitment, training and management program. The workforce was comprised, as it typically is, of predominantly older and female staff.

Voting

The biggest change in voting behaviour has been a decrease in election day voting and a corresponding increase in early and postal voting as Victorians pursue more convenient methods of voting.

Figure 9: Election officials by age and gender, 2022

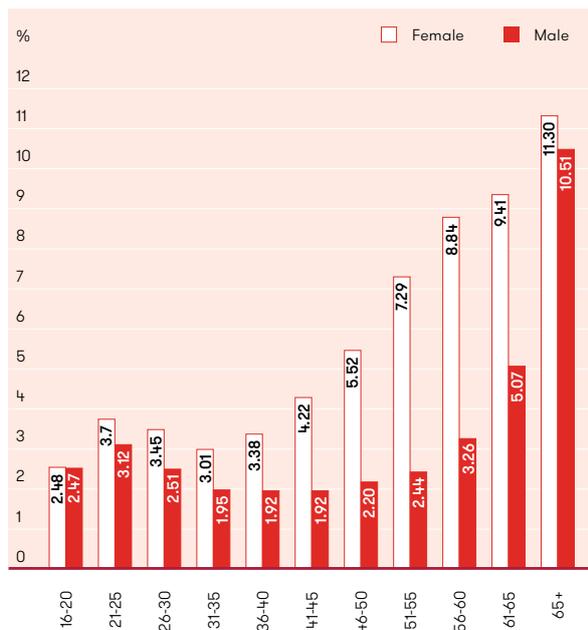
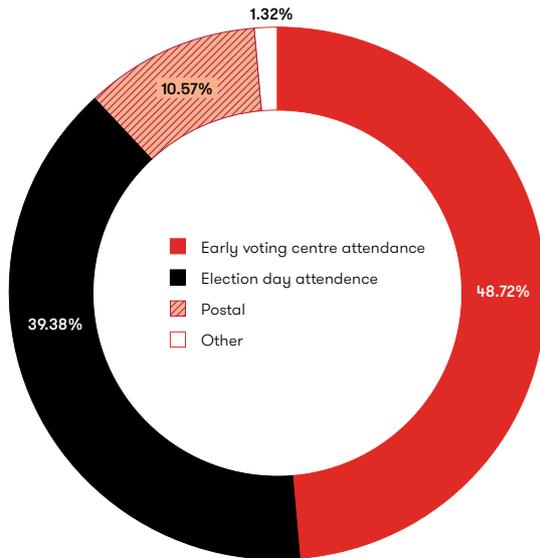


Figure 10: Votes by type, 2022 State election



Electoral activity cont.

In line with this behaviour the VEC placed a greater focus on improving accessibility of early voting centres and, despite the difficult market conditions, managed to improve accessibility ratings of the cohort of early voting centres and exceed our targets, while there was a slight decline in the accessibility of election-day voting centres as reflected in Table 9.

Table 9: Accessibility ratings of election day voting centres, 2022 compared with 2018

RATING	2022	2018
IWA (% of total VCs)	32%	18%
AWA (% of total VCs)	49%	60%
LNWA (% of total VCs)	19%	22%

Table 10: Accessibility rating of early voting centres, 2022 compared with 2018

RATING	2022	2018
IWA (% of total VCs)	32%	18%
AWA (% of total VCs)	49%	60%
LNWA (% of total VCs)	19%	22%

Counting the votes

The counting of votes began at the close of voting (6.00 pm) on Saturday 26 November and continued until Wednesday 7 December when the final count results for the Legislative Council were published on the VEC website. Formal declarations were completed by Tuesday 13 December. Repeating the success of 2018, all postal votes were counted at the centralised Postal Vote Count Centre to allow election offices to focus on counting own district early votes and to minimise the movement of ballot papers across the state during the counting period.

Immediately after voting closes, to attain a rapid indication of the result, voting centres publish first preference counts of votes at those locations. Within 3 hours of the close of voting, 73.97% of voting centres had published their results, and one hour later that figure was 92.19%. More rigorous counting occurs over the weekend with 78.44% of total votes for the Legislative Assembly counted, which includes postal votes, absent votes and provisional votes – categories of votes that are not counted on election night itself.

Compulsory voting

After a State election, the VEC carries out activities related to compulsory voting provisions in the *Electoral Act 2002*. Apparent Failure to Vote Notices were sent to 288,511 enrolled electors who appeared to have not voted, who then had 28 days to provide a valid and sufficient excuse or provide information as to where and when they voted. Following this, Infringement notices were then sent to 220,218 non-voters who did not respond to the first notice or who did not provide a valid and sufficient excuse. Later in the financial year penalty reminder notices will be sent out for non-voters who did not pay the infringement penalty or have it withdrawn as a result of internal review. At the conclusion of the penalty reminder stage penalties collected will be reconciled and forwarded to Consolidated Revenue. Outstanding infringements will be lodged with Fines Victoria and court proceedings will be commenced for those non-voters opting to go to court.

Funding and disclosure

Amendments to the *Electoral Act 2002* introduced new laws governing political donations and funding in Victoria. These laws came into effect in 2 stages: stage one on 1 August 2018, banning anonymous donations over \$1,000 and foreign donations, and commencing new administrative funding for registered political parties and independent elected members; and stage two on 25 November 2018 – the day after the 2018 State election – governing the disclosure and reporting of donations, and the commencement of advance public funding for eligible candidates. The 2022 State election was the first election with these new laws fully in place. The VEC conducted an extensive engagement program to educate stakeholders. This represents a step change for the VEC as an emerging regulator. For more information about compliance and enforcement, see the Funding and disclosure chapter on page 66.

Customer feedback and complaints

The VEC received 2,675 submissions about the election, during the election period between 31 October 2022 and 16 December 2022. This represents a significant increase on the 861 submissions received during the last State election. Of these 2,675 submissions, 1,360 were about VEC administration and services to voters – for example, the postal vote application process or the location of voting centres. There were 449 submissions about advertising and electoral material which discussed several themes including authorisation requirements and unsolicited text messages or calls from RPPs or candidates. There were 354 submissions related to candidates, campaign workers and parties, primarily comprising complaints about the conduct of candidates and campaign workers at voting centres. There were 259 submissions related to the VEC’s staffing, including complaints about a lack of staffing or errors made by staff. Finally, there were 162 submissions about the integrity of the election.

The majority of submissions were complaints, and some of the most common sub-categories of complaints are presented in Table 12 below.

Table 11: Contacts with the VEC customer feedback and complaints team for the 2022 State election, by type

TYPE OF CONTACT	NUMBER OF CONTACTS
Complaint	1,956
Enquiry	327
Other feedback	326
Allegation	58
Report	8
Total submissions	2,675

Table 12: Most frequent subjects of complaints relating to the 2022 State election, by sub-category

SUB-CATEGORY OF COMPLAINT	FREQUENCY
Conduct of a campaign worker, candidate or political party	278
Electoral integrity	137
Postal vote not received	120
Authorisation of electoral material	87
Conduct of a VEC staff member	87
Location of a VEC venue	86
Information privacy	75

Electoral activity cont.

Inquiries and disputes

Several matters associated with the 2022 State election were brought before VCAT, the Supreme Court, and the Court of Disputed Returns. They involved registration of how-to-vote cards, party registration, a challenge to the election of a member and a challenge to the VEC’s handling of the election writs. These matters are discussed in Governing legislations and tribunals section at page 36. All these proceedings were resolved according to law in a timely manner and did not result in changes to the return of the writs.

Statistical overview

The informal voting rate for the Legislative Assembly was 5.53%, which is a slight decline from 2018. The informal voting rate for the Legislative Assembly has increased at every election, except 2022, since 1996 when it was just 2.37%. This represents the arrest of a significant long-term negative trend. In contrast, the informal voting rate for the Legislative Council has risen from 2.58% in 1996 to 3.22% in 2022. Blank ballot papers were the most common form of informal voting (17.44%), followed by papers marked with number 1 only (24.89%). Approximately 56% of informal voters expressed some form of preference, which suggests unintentional informal votes, while a strong minority, 41% were apparently intentionally informal.

The proportion of people voting below-the-line on their region ballot paper has continued to rise, from 8.87% in 2018 to 9.19% in 2022.

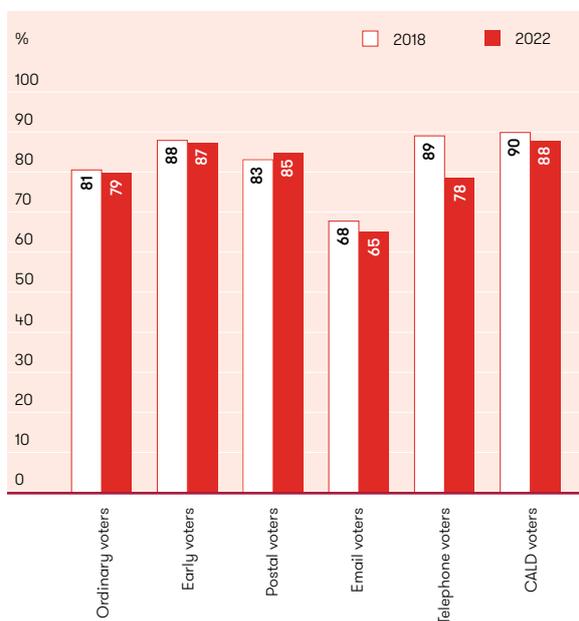
Analysis of results

Across both houses of Parliament, 35% of the members elected were new. The youngest candidate was 19 years old and the oldest was 85 years old. The youngest candidate elected was 25 years old and the oldest candidate elected was 71 years old. The VEC does not collect any other demographic information about candidates, such as gender or ethnicity.

Evaluation

The VEC engaged research firm Colmar Brunton to conduct independent evaluation of election services. Overall, there was a high level of confidence in the VEC – the average rating in survey’s for confidence in the VEC delivering fair, impartial and high quality elections was 8.6 out of 10 with 31.8% of respondents, the largest contingent, rating the VEC 10/10. There was a high rate of recall of information from the VEC during the election – 75%, compared to 85% at the previous election. While this is a decline, it should be The VEC engaged research firm Kantar Public to conduct independent evaluation of election services. Overall, there was a high level of confidence in the VEC – the average rating in surveys for confidence in the VEC delivering fair, impartial and high-quality elections was 8.6 out of 10 with 31.8% of respondents, the largest contingent, rating the VEC 10/10. There was a high rate of recall of information from the VEC during the election – 75%, compared to 85% at the previous election. While this is a decline, it should be contextualised by the changing media landscape in Australia and increasingly media saturated environment for Victorian elections. Voter satisfaction was generally stable, with some slight declines with the most significant, but still small, drop in satisfaction among telephone voters. Part of this trend might be linked to a broader decline in satisfaction with the Australian political climate.

Figure 11: Voter satisfaction by category, 2018 to 2022



Preparations for the 2024 Local government elections

The program delivery structure for the next Victorian local government elections was confirmed in October 2022. This structure incorporates lessons learned from the previous 2 major events and embeds a proactive approach to establish a library of program and project plans, data sources and timelines.

As part of the preparations, the VEC has progressed a number of key changes to the operating model for LG2024 being the centralisation of the Public Enquiry Service along with the expansion of Telephone Assisted Voting (pending regulatory amendment). The focus of LG2024 will be on sustainability of our workforce, the establishment of a shared services model and an increased focus on Field Operations.

Local government by-elections and countbacks

An extraordinary vacancy arises in a council when a councillor resigns, dies or can no longer hold office as a councillor. The LGA 2020 provides for a countback to be conducted in the first instance when an extraordinary vacancy arises in a multi-councillor ward or unsubdivided council. A by-election is necessary when an extraordinary vacancy arises in a single-councillor ward, or where the vacancy cannot be filled by a countback because of a failed countback, or because there are no eligible candidates for the election.

During 2022–23, the VEC conducted 3 local government by-elections and 20 countbacks to fill extraordinary vacancies.

The details of all by-elections and countbacks conducted during 2022–23 are included in Table 13 and Table 14.

The number of extraordinary vacancies was comparable in 2022–23 to 2018–19, which is the previous reporting year matching this stage of the local government term, when there were 5 by-elections and 18 countbacks.

In 2022–23, all countbacks were held online via a webinar (utilising Microsoft Teams) using the VEC's web-based computer countback application. However, due to the nature of the modified countback, held for Baw Baw Shire Council Central Ward, a webinar and countback application was not required.

The average cost of a countback in 2022–23 was \$1,144.11 (excluding GST). This cost includes public notices placed in local newspapers (where requested), configuration of the countback application, and staff time.

All by-elections and countbacks were conducted in compliance with legislative requirements, within budget and with no elections failed or overturned. The VEC achieved its aim of providing value for money local government election services.

State supplementary election

A State supplementary election takes place if a Lower House election has failed due to a candidate's death between close of nominations and election day; the successful candidate's death between election day and being declared elected; or no candidates nominate. A supplementary election was required for Narracan District due to the death of a candidate between closing of nominations and election day.

State by-elections

A State by-election occurs if a Member of Parliament for the Legislative Assembly resigns or can no longer hold office. The VEC maintains the capability and capacity to conduct State by-elections as required, within minimum prescribed timeframes. There were no State by-elections in 2022–23.

On 7 July 2023 the member for Warrandyte announced his resignation from parliament, which will trigger a by-election in financial year 2023–24 on Saturday 26 August 2023. This will be the first by-election held in Victoria in 6 years. Preliminary work began immediately at the VEC with a service plan being prepared, along with other work with a long lead time, such as the acquisition of venues for voting centres. The VEC will report on the conduct of this by-election to Parliament, as required by law, within 12 months after the election is held and in the 2023–24 annual report.

Other elections and polls

Under Victorian legislation, the VEC is required to conduct certain elections and polls. Depending on the legislation, these elections and polls may be partly or wholly funded by the VEC. The VEC also conducts fee-for-service and non-statutory elections that meet certain criteria, including the number of electors, the existence of formal election rules, and election timing.

During 2022–23, the VEC conducted 3 fee-for-service elections. All were conducted in accordance with their relevant rules or legislation and were delivered on time and within budget.

Local government and other elections cont.

Table 13: Electoral Activity, 2018–19 to 2022–23

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
State elections (88 districts, 8 regions)*	1	-	-	-	1
State supplementary election	-	-	-	-	1
State by-elections	-	-	-	-	-
Local government (council) general elections	-	-	76	1	-
Local government (council) by-elections	5	4	3	3	3
Local government countbacks	18	12	4	11	20
Liquor licensing polls	-	3	-	2	-
Commercial elections and polls	4	5	3	4	3
Total	28	24	86	21	28

* Noting that Narracan district resulted in a failed election and a supplementary election

Table 14: Elections, by-elections, countbacks and polls, 2022–23

ELECTION	TYPE	ELECTION DATE	VOTING METHOD	LOCATION	ELECTORS
Greater Shepparton City Council	Municipal countback	6 July 2022	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
ESS Super Contributor Member Board	Fee-for-service election	15 July 2022	Postal	VEC	31,550
Horsham Rural City Council	Municipal countback	6 September 2022	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Buloke Shire Council, Mallee Ward	Municipal by-election	28 October 2022	Postal	Wycheproof	1,584
Northern Grampians Shire Council, Kara Kara Ward	Municipal by-election	11 November 2022	Postal	St Arnaud	2,826
Wodonga City Council	Municipal countback	6 December 2022	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Moira Shire Council	Municipal countback	6 December 2022	N/A	Postal	N/A
Moira Shire Council	Municipal countback	12 December 2022	N/A	Postal	N/A
Greater Shepparton City Council	Municipal countback	16 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A

ELECTION	TYPE	ELECTION DATE	VOTING METHOD	LOCATION	ELECTORS
Swan Hill Rural City Council	Municipal countback	16 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Port Phillip City Council, Lake Ward	Municipal countback	16 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Yarra City Council, Langridge Ward	Municipal countback	18 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Stonnington City Council, East Ward	Municipal countback	18 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Colac Otway Shire Council	Municipal countback	18 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Brimbank City Council, Harvester Ward	Municipal countback	23 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Melton City Council, Watts Ward	Municipal countback	23 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Greater Geelong City Council, Brownbill Ward	Municipal countback	23 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Seawinds Ward	Municipal countback	30 January 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Narracan District	Supplementary election	28 January 2023	Postal	Warragul	50,506
Colac Otway Shire Council	Municipal countback	1 March 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Municipal Association of Victoria President and Board Elections	Fee-for-service election	6 March 2023	Postal	VEC	78
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Watson Ward	Municipal by-election	17 March 2023	Postal	Hastings	14,044
Dogs Victoria Management Committee Elections 2023	Fee-for-service election	4 April 2023	Postal	VEC	7,772
Southern Grampians Shire Council	Municipal countback	15 May 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	N/A
Baw Baw Shire Council, Central Ward	Modified municipal countback	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Borough of Queenscliffe Council	Municipal countback	19 June 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	4,143
Greater Geelong City Council, Windermere Ward	Municipal countback	28 June 2023	N/A	VEC via Microsoft Teams	34,505

Enforcement of compulsory voting

The VEC enforces compulsory voting (CV) requirements after elections, by-elections and polls in which voting is compulsory. To conduct CV follow-up, the Electoral Commissioner appoints a VEC staff member as the prosecution officer.

During 2022–23, the VEC finalised CV enforcement for 2 council by-elections. The VEC has also started the enforcement process for the State election 2022, the 2023 Narracan supplementary election and 3 council by-elections.

The first stage of the non-voter follow-up process is conducted under Part 9, Division 2 of the *Electoral Act 2002*, or section 266 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Subsequent follow-up of electors who do not respond, or who provide an invalid response, is conducted under the *Infringements Act 2006*.

The VEC manages 3 stages of enforcement (or non-voter follow-up):

1. Dispatch of Apparent Failure to Vote Notices to electors who appear not to have voted in an election. Apparent non-voters have 28 days from the date of the notice to provide a valid excuse for failing to vote.
2. Follow-up (by Infringement Notice) of electors who did not respond, or who provided an invalid response to the Apparent Failure to Vote Notice. A penalty amount is applied (currently set at \$92.00). Non-voters have 35 days to respond to the Infringement Notice by making the penalty payment or seeking a review of the infringement. The VEC also considers written correspondence from non-voters detailing their reasons for failing to vote.
3. A Penalty Reminder Notice is sent to those who do not pay the infringement penalty. An amount for prescribed costs is added to the original penalty amount (currently set at \$27.70). Non-voters have 28 days to respond to the Penalty Reminder Notice by making the penalty payment or seeking a review of the infringement.

During the infringement period, non-voters have several options under the *Infringements Act 2006*, including to:

- ▶ pay the penalty in full.
- ▶ seek a payment plan.

or

- ▶ seek an internal review of the infringement. The legislation sets out the criteria by which a review can be requested and the process for conducting the review.

or

- ▶ Request the matter be referred to the Magistrates' Court.

Penalties collected during the infringement period are reconciled and transferred to consolidated revenue or forwarded to councils as required. The VEC also collates and transfers all penalties collected by Fines Victoria. A total of \$291,460.37 was paid into consolidated revenue in FY 2022–2023 from parliamentary elections. In addition, \$570,264.26 was forwarded to councils in FY 2022–2023 from the local government elections. Most of the monies are collections via Fines Victoria from older elections. Further remittance to consolidated revenue and to councils will occur as more payments are received from Fines Victoria.

Lodgement with the courts

During the infringement and penalty reminder stages of enforcement, non-voters can choose to have their matter heard in the Magistrates' Court. During 2022–23, the VEC commenced proceedings against 3 non-voters from the 2020 local government elections. All matters were heard at the mention stage and all 3 non-voters plead guilty.

At the completion of the penalty reminder stage, for the local council by-elections held in 2022–23, the VEC lodged 1,050 outstanding non-voter records with Fines Victoria.

Table 15: Enforcement of compulsory voting 2022-23

ELECTION	NOTICE TYPE*	MAIL-OUT	RECORDS	PENALTIES COLLECTED TO 30 JUNE 2022	FINES VICTORIA LODGMENT	NUMBER OF RECORDS
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Watson Ward by-election 17/03/2022	1	12 May 2023	2,233	\$0.00	N/A	N/A
	2	30 June 2023	1,588			
	3	#	TBC			
Narracan District supplementary election 28/01/2023	1	12 May 2023	7,905	\$0.00	N/A	N/A
	2	30 June 2023	3,162			
	3	#	TBC			
State election 2022 26/11/2022	1	20 April 2023 24 April 2023 7 April 2023	288,511	\$164,683.23	N/A	N/A
	2	22 June 2023 26 June 2023	220,218			
	3	#	TBC			
Northern Grampians Shire Council Kara Kara Ward by-election 04/11/2022	1	10 February 2023	314	\$2,944.00	N/A	N/A
	2	26 May 2023	208			
	3	21 July 2023	156			
Buloke Shire Council Mallee Ward by-election 21/10/2022	1	10 February 2023	149	\$2,208.00	N/A	N/A
	2	26 May 2023	109			
	3	21 July 2023	72			
Maroondah City Council Wonga Ward by-election 11/03/2022	1	1 April 2022	1,262	\$26,128.30	26 July 2022	446
	2	29 April 2022	931			
	3	16 June 2022	557			
Yarra Ranges Shire Council Streeton Ward by-election 18/02/2022	1	1 April 2022	1,659	\$43,964.21	26 July 2022	604
	2	29 April 2022	1,314			
	3	16 June 2022	767			

* 1 - Apparent Failure to Vote 2 - Infringement 3 - Penalty Reminder

Funding and disclosure

Victoria’s political funding and donation disclosure laws impose bans or caps on certain political donations, provide greater accountability and transparency through disclosure and real-time reconciliation of political donations, and provide access to political funding streams for Victoria’s Parliamentary elections. The VEC administers and enforces these laws.

The funding and disclosure regime includes disclosure obligations for those giving and receiving political donations. On the funding side it also provides candidates, elected members and registered political parties with access to 3 streams of funding:

- ▶ administrative expenditure funding – for general office costs
- ▶ policy development funding – for policy development costs
- ▶ public funding – for campaign costs.

Administrative expenditure funding is paid quarterly in advance to independent elected members and registered political parties with elected members. Policy development funding entitlements are paid following the end of each calendar year. Public funding eligibility and entitlements are calculated and paid based on first preference votes received at an election.

Recipients of public funding may also be paid advance public funding in instalments ahead of the next State election. Any overpaid advance funding will be corrected and recovered in accordance with the Electoral Act. All recipients of funding must provide an audit certificate to substantiate the amount of expenditure claimed.

Section 217Q of the Electoral Act requires that donation caps, thresholds and funding amounts are indexed annually. The indexation factor for the 2022–23 financial year was 1.025338.

For the 2022–23 reporting year the general cap, disclosure threshold and funding amounts were applied as set out in Table 16 Donations and disclosure caps indexed values for 2023. These caps apply in various ways; notably the general cap does not apply to candidates donating to their own campaign.

Table 16: Donations and disclosure caps indexed values for 2023

	AMOUNT
Disclosure threshold	\$1,080.00
General cap	\$4,320.00
Public funding MLA	\$6.49 per vote
Public funding MLC	\$3.24 per vote
Administrative expenditure funding (per year), capped at 45 members	\$216,210 for first member \$75,660 for second member \$37,850 for the third to forty-fifth members
Policy development funding	\$1.08 per first preference vote or \$27,020 (whichever is greater)

VEC Disclosures: The online disclosure system

VEC Disclosures is the VEC’s online disclosure reporting system, accessed via the VEC website. It serves as the integrated political donations disclosure and annual return submission tool for all stakeholders governed by the obligations outlined in Part 12 of the Electoral Act.

One of the key highlights over the past year was the substantial increase in the number of users registering on VEC Disclosures due to the State election. Registrations increased by more than 252%, reaching a total of 2,016 registered donors or recipients.

In addition to the substantial increase in users over the past year, we made minor enhancements to VEC Disclosures to improve the overall user experience and maintain compliance with evolving regulatory requirements. For example, we’ve been responsive to recent regulatory changes that now require us to more tightly safeguard the privacy of personal information in annual returns. As a result, we’ve made minor adjustments to the system that help us more easily manage the data we receive to meet our regulatory obligations and transparency objectives in publishing annual returns.

Throughout the year, the VEC has actively collaborated with electoral commissions around Australia. We have conducted multiple sessions where we achieved a robust exchange of ideas, best practices and insights. Following the establishment of a community of practice focused on funding and disclosure matters, which is chaired by the VEC, we look forward to further advancing our inter-agency collaboration.

Political donations overview

The 2022 State election was the first election for Victoria’s political funding and disclosure laws, which were introduced to the Electoral Act in 2018 and commenced the day after election day in 2018.

The Electoral Act requires donors and recipients of political donations above the disclosure threshold (\$1,080 in financial year 2022–23) to disclose the donation within 21 days of making or receiving it.

During the reporting period the VEC published information on 1,841 donations on VEC Disclosures. These donations were valued at \$4,382,173.63. Published donations can be viewed by the public, boosting transparency in the Victorian political system. Note that for various reasons the number of donations and their value may be subject to minor adjustments from time to time.

Donation disclosure timeliness

For the reporting period, 39% of donations published were fully compliant (the donation was disclosed on time by both donor and recipient), 47% of donations were partially compliant (donation was disclosed late by either donor or recipient) and 14% of donations were disclosed late by both donor and recipient.

Table 17: Donation timeliness for donations published in 2022–23

COMPLIANCE STATUS	TIMELINESS STATUS	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL
Fully compliant	Donation disclosed on time by both donor and recipient	715	38.84%
Partially compliant	Donation disclosed late by one party to the transaction	864	46.93%
Non-compliant	Donation disclosed late by both donor and recipient	262	14.23%
Total		1,841	

Funding and disclosure cont.

As the 2022 State election was the first election with live donation disclosure obligations, VEC officers engaged closely with donors and recipients to support them to reconcile their disclosure returns and meet their legal requirements. This is consistent with the VEC’s regulatory approach, which seeks to educate and guide people about their obligations wherever appropriate, rather than always pursuing litigation, in this case under section 218A(1) of the Electoral Act that carries a maximum penalty of 300 penalty units, 2 years imprisonment, or both.

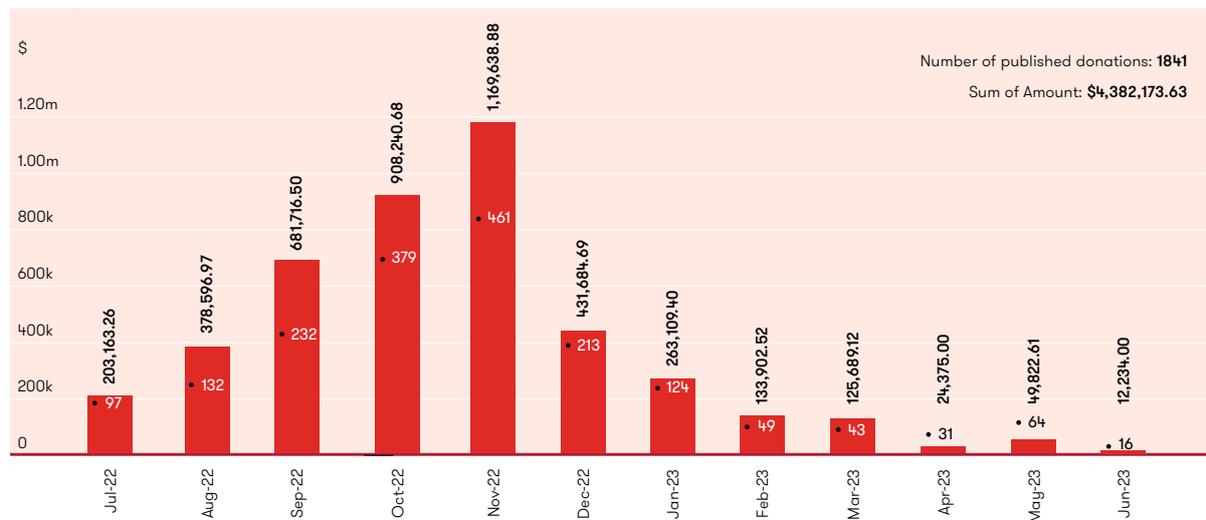
Donation timeliness breakdown by donor and recipient

In this reporting period, the VEC noted that recipients of political donations met their disclosure obligations more often than donors. This trend will be explored ahead of State election 2026, and the VEC will consider further opportunities for education and engagement with the aim of improving awareness and compliance with legal obligations.

Table 18: Proportion of donors and recipients who met the disclosure timing requirements

DONOR AND RECIPIENT COMPLIANCE STATUS	% OF THE TIME COMPLAINT
Donors were late meeting their disclosure obligations	49%
Recipients were late meeting their disclosure obligations	28%

Figure 12: Published donations by dollar value with total number of donations as at 6 October 2023, by month



Political donation activity peaked during September, October and November 2022, the 3 months leading up to election day.

November 2022 marked the first time more than \$1 million of political donations were published in a single month, and partly reflects the large number of registered political parties and independent candidates who contested the election.

Political donations came from the following categories of donors in the reporting period:

- ▶ individual
- ▶ organisation
- ▶ elected member
- ▶ endorsed candidate
- ▶ independent candidate
- ▶ associated entity
- ▶ third party campaigner organisation
- ▶ third party campaigner individual
- ▶ registered political party

Political donation monitoring

The VEC tracks donations by organisation and individuals to look for any kind of illegal activity. This could be donations from a foreign source, donations exceeding the general cap, multiple donations by businesses, banned donations and anything that could be a potential scheme to circumvent Victoria's funding and disclosure laws.

ASIC searches are undertaken on organisations to ascertain the identity of all board members including directors, former directors and secretaries and shareholdings of companies. The names of these people are then checked in VEC Disclosures to see if they also appear as individual donors.

Organisational donors must have a registered Australian Business Number (ABN) or Australian Company Number (ACN).

The number of ASIC searches conducted increased substantially in the reporting period, with 163 undertaken. This compares to 64 completed in 2021-22.

The ASIC reports provide vital intelligence for our donation monitoring process. The VEC will not comment on the progress of compliance reviews if we believe that doing so may compromise procedural fairness.

Annual returns

The deadline for submitting annual returns for the 2021-22 financial year was 20 October 2022, and the deadline for the VEC to publish 2021-22 annual returns was 31 December 2022.

The number of annual returns for the 2021-22 financial year (and published in the reporting period of 2022-23) was 79:

- ▶ 16 were from registered political parties
- ▶ 53 were from associated entities
- ▶ 3 were from nominated entities
- ▶ 6 were from third-party campaigner organisations
- ▶ 1 was from an independent elected member

This year was the first time that annual return submissions coincided with an election year. Because the deadline for lodging 2021-22 annual returns was 20 October 2022, less than 6 weeks before the 26 November State election, the VEC had an intense workload during this time and received a significant volume of queries from stakeholders concerning their donations and annual returns.

Stakeholder engagement

Interactions with funding and disclosure stakeholders increased substantially during the reporting period because of the 2022 State election. October and November 2022 saw a peak in contacts in relation to a wide range of funding and disclosure matters, including registration and use queries for VEC Disclosures, donation rules, public funding, State campaign accounts and annual return obligations.

The VEC's funding, disclosure and party registration officers also held briefings in the lead-up to the November 2022 State election for newly registered political parties to help them understand their obligations under Victoria's funding and disclosure laws. Eight briefings occurred between 1 July and the State election. A further 4 party briefings have been held following the 2022 State election, including to assist new registered officers of existing registered political parties to understand their obligations.

Stakeholders involved in the briefings provided positive feedback.

Funding and disclosure cont.

Research

During the reporting period, the VEC undertook a research project to evaluate the policies and tools other Australian electoral commissions use to encourage political donors and political donation recipients to comply with their legislative requirements. The project proved to be a useful information-gathering and benchmarking exercise for the VEC's funding and disclosure activities and has resulted in several improvement opportunities identified for future years.

Political funding

During the reporting period, the VEC facilitated payment of a total of \$20,327,550.16 on behalf of the State to eligible registered political parties, independent elected members and candidates entitled to access funding. This included:

- ▶ \$1,939,923.43 in public funding, to 14 parties, and 31 independent candidates (note: this is inclusive of funding overpaid/underpaid in advance of the 2022 State election)
- ▶ \$11,996,011.20 in advance public funding, to 13 parties and 11 independent candidates (40% of entitlement in advance of the 2026 State election)
- ▶ \$64,313.46 in public funding, to 3 parties and one independent candidate who submitted and were paid their entitlement prior to June 30 2023 for the Narracan supplementary election
- ▶ \$6,177,111.65 in administrative expenditure funding, to 15 parties and 5 independent elected members
- ▶ \$150,190.42 for policy development funding, to 2~parties.

The VEC also recovered \$1,124,034.34 in relation to overpayments for political funding paid during the previous financial year. Overpayments most often occur when funding recipients do not incur the full entitlement paid to them as claimable expenditure. The VEC routinely audits funding returns and commences steps to recover funding amounts which are not correctly acquitted.

Funding assessment

In facilitating payment of the different types of funding, the VEC received applications, statements of expenditure, and annual returns as required from the funding recipients, and was then obliged to assess them against the legislated requirements for completeness, compliance and accuracy. A significant majority of the submissions received had some number of errors, including failure to provide all the necessary pages or signatures, required statements that were missing or incomplete, and misstated expenditure or entitlement amounts. These errors were eventually resolved in consultation with the applicants.

Narracan District supplementary election

The Narracan District supplementary election in January 2023 required additional administration for the VEC's funding and disclosure activities, as supplementary elections are defined as separate elections. Of the 6 eligible funding recipients, 4 applied and received their funding in FY 2022-23.

Electoral Compliance and Enforcement

The Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch was restructured last year to build the VEC's regulatory capability. The new electoral compliance function took the lead for investigating alleged offences against the Electoral Act.

Although allegations of offences were most often received through the VEC's complaints process, particularly during the 2022 state election, compliance and investigation activity was also triggered by internal referrals, own motion matters, and information and intelligence reported to the VEC by other law enforcement and integrity agencies.

Regulatory approach

The VEC published its regulatory approach in October 2022. The VEC adopts a constructive compliance approach for its regulatory activities, which focuses on providing electoral participants with resources to understand and comply with their obligations.

Where a person or organisation fails to comply with their obligations, compliance action is taken proportionate to the VEC's assessment of harm.

Excluding failure to vote offences, the VEC conducted one prosecution during the reporting period involving 2 offences against Part 12 of the *Electoral Act 2002*. The accused plead guilty to the charges and was ordered to make a payment to the Court Fund, enter a 6-month adjourned undertaking, and contribute to the VEC's prosecution costs.

Field compliance support

The VEC increased its compliance presence and regulatory support for field activities during the 2022 State election.

Staff from the VEC's electoral compliance team were called to attend several sites during the early voting period to assist the election manager in managing poor behaviour by campaign workers observed outside early voting centres. Consistent with the VEC's regulatory approach, the attending staff sought the cooperation of those present, reminded them of their obligations, assisted to resolve any structural frustrations causing the behaviour, and offered reassurance to election staff and any others at the site.

On election day, the electoral compliance team operated 4 teams to assist with triaging and managing any serious incidents, poor behaviour or other possible electoral offences. One team was based in Melbourne's south-east, and the other 3 teams were based at the VEC's head office. The teams attended and provided ad hoc support to VEC staff at numerous voting centres on election day.

Following election day, the teams maintained a presence at the VEC's Centralised Activity Site, and attended field locations on several occasions to assist local election staff with scrutineer management.

Cease and desist notices

During the 2022 State election, the VEC issued 6 formal notices requiring the recipient to cease and desist an activity that was not permitted under the Electoral Act. Each notice intended to intervene in activity by the recipients that – the VEC had determined – damaged the election, prevent any further damage, and give notice of further remedies available through civil and criminal actions for violating the cease and desist request.

Following a joint decision by VCAT on the applications by candidates Sophie Torney, Melissa Lowe and Kate Lardner, 5 notices were withdrawn as the issue in contention was resolved by VCAT's decision.

Electoral Compliance and Enforcement cont.

Victoria Police partnership

In response to recommendation 40 from the Electoral Matters Committee's report on its inquiry into the conduct of the 2018 Victorian State election, the VEC took a proactive approach to its regulatory function for the 2022 State election, including building a more strategic partnership with Victoria Police.

The partnership was led by dedicated relationship managers at both agencies, and Victoria Police established a dedicated State election structure to coordinate its handling of election-related matters. Referral procedures were established to promptly alert police to emerging issues and allow for a police response to be coordinated. Police liaison officers were available during the early voting period and provided on-site coverage at the VEC on election day.

The VEC developed fact sheets for Victoria Police providing information about key activities in the election timeline, roles and responsibilities of VEC staff at election venues, the role of scrutineers during the counting period, and information about electoral offences. The fact sheets ensured local police called to attend a VEC location were better equipped to deal with election issues.

Coercive powers of compliance officers

To support the VEC in its regulation of Victoria's funding and disclosure requirements, the Electoral Act provides for employees to be appointed as compliance officers under the Act. The limited powers provided to compliance officers allow them to require certain people to produce documents or other information, or appear to give evidence. The VEC is conscious of the responsibility of this power and limits its use accordingly. The Coercive Notice Control Board provides ongoing governance and advice to the Electoral Commissioner on the use and review of compliance officer powers.

The Terms of Reference for the Coercive Notice Control Board was updated on 8 May 2023 to reflect changes in membership. As at 30 June 2023, the board comprises:

- ▶ the independent chair of the VEC's Audit and Risk Committee, who is the chair
- ▶ two VEC senior leaders (Director, Human Resources and Manager, Compliance and Risk).

During the reporting period, compliance officers issued 46 written notices under Part 12 of the Electoral Act.

During the reporting period, 5 notices were reviewed by request of the person issued the notice. For each review request, the Coercive Notice Control Board was asked by the Electoral Commissioner to consider the review and inform the Electoral Commissioner's review pursuant to section 222C of the Electoral Act 2002. In response to a review request, the Electoral Commissioner may affirm, vary or set aside a compliance officer's notice.

In all 5 cases, the Electoral Commissioner affirmed the decision of the compliance officer to issue the notice.

Services to political parties

Party Registration

It is not compulsory for political parties to be registered to contest an election. Registration does give a party certain benefits under the Electoral Act. This includes access to policy development funding (if otherwise eligible), the use of a logo on the ballot paper and access to voter information on a periodic basis.

To qualify for registration, a political party must have a written constitution and at least 500 members who are:

- ▶ on the Victorian register of electors;
- ▶ party members in accordance with the party's rules; and
- ▶ not members of another registered political party (RPP) or party applying for registration.

To improve engagement, parties applying for registration were invited to attend briefings with the Party Registration team to support their understanding of the registration process, such as the requirement to complete registration before the legislated cut-off date 120 days before a state election.

Register of political parties

The VEC is legislatively required to establish and maintain a register of political parties. During the reporting period:

- ▶ 8 political parties successfully achieved registration status; and
- ▶ 8 political parties failed to achieve registration (7 political parties were refused registration as they failed to demonstrate that they had 500 eligible members, and one political party withdrew its application).

During the reporting period, the Victorians Party and Derryn Hinch's Justice Party were voluntarily deregistered.

Other key changes to the register of political parties included:

- ▶ 2 logo changes;
- ▶ 9 registered officer changes; and
- ▶ 4 registered officers' address changes.

Services to political parties cont.

Table 19: Register of political parties, as at 30 July 2023

PARTY NAME	REGISTERED OFFICER	ADDRESS	REGISTERED LOGO
Angry Victorians Party Abbreviated name: AVP Registered 28 October 2022	Nicole Elizabeth Freeman Registered officer	Level 2, 111 Hogan Street Tatura VIC 3616 Postal address: PO Box 11 Lara VIC 3212	
Animal Justice Party Abbreviated name: AJP Re-registered 17 November 2020	Austin Cram Registered officer	Ground Floor, 470 St Kilda Road Melbourne VIC 3004 Postal address: Ground Floor, 470 St Kilda Road Melbourne VIC 3004	
Australian Labor Party – Victorian Branch Abbreviated name: Australian Labor Party Re-registered 22 December 2020	Christopher Ford State secretary	438 Docklands Drive Docklands VIC 3008 Postal address: Locked Bag 3240 Melbourne VIC 3001	
Companions and Pets Party Abbreviated name: Companions and Pets Registered 19 September 2022	John Hutchison Registered officer	312 Centre Road Langwarrin VIC 3910	
Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Abbreviated name: Labour DLP Re-registered 2 March 2021	Cary de Wit Registered officer	441 Flemington Road North Melbourne VIC 3051 Postal address: PO Box 1402 Melbourne VIC 3001	
Family First Victoria Registered 6 October 2022	Alister Cameron Registered officer	Level 19, 180 Lonsdale Street Melbourne VIC 3000 Postal address: PO Box 4321 Burwood East VIC 3151	

PARTY NAME	REGISTERED OFFICER	ADDRESS	REGISTERED LOGO
Fiona Patten's Reason Party Abbreviated name: Reason Re-registered 2 February 2021	Ange Hopkins Registered officer	36 Jamieson Street Coburg VIC 3058 Postal address: 91 Johnston Street Collingwood VIC 3066	
Freedom Party of Victoria Abbreviated name: FPV Registered 29 September 2022	Aidan McLindon Registered officer	8/220 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000	
Health Australia Party Abbreviated name: HAP Re-registered 18 December 2020	Lisa Bentley Registered officer	170 Melbourne Road Williamstown VIC 3016 Postal address: 170 Melbourne Road Williamstown VIC 3016	
Legalise Cannabis Victoria Abbreviated name: Legalise Cannabis Registered 13 October 2022	Craig Ellis Registered officer	51 Cullen Street Nimbin NSW 2480 Postal address: PO Box 788 Neutral Bay NSW 2089	
Liberal Democratic Party Abbreviated name: Liberal Democrats Re-registered 2 February 2021	Robert McCathie Registered officer	117/757 Bourke Street Docklands VIC 3008	
Liberal Party of Australia – Victorian Division Abbreviated name: Liberal Re-registered 3 December 2020	Stuart Smith Registered officer	Level 12, 257 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000 Postal address: GPO Box 2342 Melbourne VIC 3001	
National Party of Australia – Victoria Abbreviated name: The Nationals Re-registered 11 November 2020	Matthew Harris State director	Level 13, 30 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000	

Services to political parties cont.

PARTY NAME	REGISTERED OFFICER	ADDRESS	REGISTERED LOGO
<p>New Democrats Abbreviated name: ND Registered 6 October 2022</p>	<p>Kaushaliya Virjibhai Vaghela Registered officer</p>	<p>4 James Street Laverton North VIC 3026</p> <p>Postal address: PO Box 8081 Tarneit Post Shop, Wyndham Village Shopping Centre Shop 7A, 380 Sayers Road Tarneit VIC 3029</p>	
<p>Pauline Hanson's One Nation Abbreviated name: PHON Re-registered 2 February 2020</p>	<p>Pauline Hanson Registered officer</p>	<p>Unit 17, 109 Holt Street Eagle Farm QLD 4009</p> <p>Postal Address: PO Box 136 Pinkenba QLD 4008</p>	
<p>Restore Democracy Sack Dan Andrews Party Abbreviated name: Sack Dan Andrews Restore Democracy Registered 28 October 2022</p>	<p>Berke Yolcu Registered officer</p>	<p>130A Murray Street Colac VIC 3250</p> <p>Postal Address: PO Box 837 Springvale South VIC 3172</p>	
<p>Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Victoria Abbreviated name: Shooters, Fishers & Farmers Vic Re-registered 17 November 2020</p>	<p>Nicole Bourman Secretary</p>	<p>Suite 504, 365 Little Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000</p> <p>Postal address: PO Box 92 Moorabbin VIC 3189</p>	

PARTY NAME	REGISTERED OFFICER	ADDRESS	REGISTERED LOGO
Sustainable Australia – Stop Overdevelopment/ Corruption Abbreviated name: Sustainable Australia Party Re-registered 4 December 2020	William Bourke Registered officer	20 Burlington Street Crows Nest NSW 2065 Postal address: PO Box 575 Crows Nest NSW 1585	
The Australian Greens – Victoria Abbreviated name: Australian Greens Re-registered 25 November 2020	Martin Shield Registered officer	Level 1, 45 William Street Melbourne VIC 3000	
Transport Matters Party Abbreviated name: Transport Matters Re-registered 3 December 2020	Mr Rodney Barton Registered officer	Suite 1,128-136 Jolimont Road East Melbourne VIC 3002 Postal address: PO Box 2012 Templestowe Lower VIC 3107	Transport Matters 
United Australia Party Abbreviated name: UAP Registered 29 September 2022	Ralph Babet Registered officer	Suite 35, Level 2, 66 Victor Crescent Narre Warren, VIC 3805	
Victorian Socialists Re-registered 18 December 2020	Corey Oakley Secretary	54 Victoria Street Carlton South VIC 3053	

Electoral structure and boundary reviews

The VEC provides technical and administrative support to any Electoral Representation Advisory Panels established by the Minister for Local Government to conduct local government electoral structure reviews. In addition, the VEC conducts electoral ward boundary reviews.

Electoral Representation Advisory Panels

Under the *Local Government Act 2020* (LG Act 2020), electoral structure reviews for local councils are conducted by an Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (ERAP). The members of the ERAP are appointed by the Minister for Local Government.

Under the Act, the VEC is not responsible for reviewing council electoral structures but must provide administrative and technical support to the panel. The Electoral Commissioner (or their delegate) must be a member of each panel.

The Minister for Local Government formed 2 ERAPs in October 2022 to review the electoral structure of 39 local councils before the October 2024 local council elections.

Panel 1

- ▶ The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC (Chairperson)
- ▶ Ms Liz Williams PSM
- ▶ Electoral Commissioner Mr Warwick Gately AM (January to March 2023)

Upon Warwick Gately's retirement as Victoria's Electoral Commissioner, the following representatives of the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) were nominated as panel members:

- ▶ Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation Mr Keegan Bartlett (April 2023)
- ▶ Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner Ms Máiréad Doyle (May 2023 onwards).

Panel 2

- ▶ Ms Julie Eisenbise (Chairperson)
- ▶ Mr Tim Presnell
- ▶ Acting Electoral Commissioner Ms Dana Fleming

The *LG Act 2020* sets out 3 allowable structures (unsubdivided, single-councillor wards, and multi-councillor wards with an equal number of councillors in each ward), reduced from 5 permitted under the previous *Local Government Act 1989*. All councils must have a single-councillor ward structure unless the Minister has gazetted a notice specifying that a council is permitted to have either of the other 2 types of structures. On 23 April 2020, a notice was published in the Victorian Government Gazette, indicating that all metropolitan, interface (outer council areas of Melbourne) and regional city councils must have single-councillor ward structures, and that all rural councils may have one of the 3 permitted structures.

Three rounds of electoral structure reviews are scheduled for 2023–24 to review 39 councils whose structures are currently not compliant with the LG Act 2020 and the gazetted provision of April 2020.

The VEC supports the ERAPs in the following ways:

- ▶ Collaborating with Local Government Victoria to support the ERAPs establishment and suggest program structure
- ▶ Secretariat support
- ▶ Providing enrolment statistics and commissioning demographic projections
- ▶ Providing independent electoral structure advice
- ▶ Engaging researchers, report writers, geospatial analysts and program administrators
- ▶ Providing technical expertise in boundary modelling and calculations
- ▶ Conducting research on each council and drafting reports that reflect panel considerations and decisions
- ▶ Public engagement including conducting a communications program, information sessions and public hearings
- ▶ Receiving and publishing public submissions on the VEC website

- ▶ Publishing preliminary reports on the VEC website
- ▶ Providing final reports to the Minister for Local Government on behalf of ERAPs
- ▶ Budget management and cost recovery

Research and reporting services

A research team was established specifically to support the ESBR program. The team conducts research to inform the panels about the councils being reviewed and supports the decision-making process. Research topics include geography, demographics, communities of interest, previous electoral structures and history of electoral events in the area. The team also analyses all public submissions received by the panels and supports the preparation of reports on the panels' considerations and findings.

Geospatial services

The VEC's existing Geospatial operations team provides technical expertise to the ERAPs as part of the ESBR program. Preparations before commencement included the procurement of demographic data and elector projections and the administration of spatial systems and boundary modelling software. During the program, geospatial analysts research each council area and analyse public submissions received by the panels.

The team develops and test boundary models for compliance with legislative requirements and ERAP criteria, presents the strongest models to the ERAPs and creates mapping products for publication and inclusion in reports. The Geospatial capability team updated and administered the Public Submissions tool which enables submitters to create boundary models using an interactive map modelling tool. This tool includes relevant statistics for the calculation of voter numbers in each ward and deviations of the average number of voters across all wards created.

Ward boundary reviews

The LG Act 2020 also provides for the VEC to conduct ward boundary reviews (previously known as subdivision reviews under the LG Act 1989). Under the LG Act 2020, if the VEC advises the Minister that the number of voters per councillor in one or more wards of the municipal district of the council will vary from the average number of voters per councillor for all the wards by more than 10% by the time that the next general election is held, the Minister may request the VEC to conduct a ward boundary review. The provisions of the LG Act 2020 relating to ward boundary reviews are like those which related to subdivision reviews under the previous Act. The Minister has requested the VEC to conduct ward boundary reviews of 10 councils, which are scheduled to take place in early 2024. The 39 councils who are already having an electoral structure review will not also have a ward boundary review in 2023-24.

Table 20: Electoral structure and boundary reviews 2018-19 to 2022-23

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Representation reviews (LG Act 1989)	12	19	n/a	n/a	n/a
Subdivision reviews (LG Act 1989)	0	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
State redivisions (EBC Act 1982)	0	0	0	1	0
Electoral structure and boundary reviews (LG Act 2020)	n/a	n/a	0	0	12
Ward boundary reviews (LG Act 2020)	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
Total	12	26	0	1	12

Register of electors

One of the VEC's key objectives is to maintain the accuracy and security of the register of electors, increase the proportion of eligible electors enrolled year-on-year and maintain this measure at or above the national average. The VEC undertakes a range of activities to keep the register of electors current and complete, and to ensure electors vote and vote correctly.

Joint Enrolment programs

The VEC works closely with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to maintain a joint enrolment process. This enables enrolment information provided to one agency to be shared with the other agency. The VEC has a service level agreement with the AEC, managed by a Joint Roll Management Committee (JRMC) that typically meets at least every 6 months and a Joint Roll Management Board (JRMB), which meets annually.

The JRMC focus in 2022-23 was to continue close collaboration and coordinated messaging between agencies to facilitate a seamless running of enrolment programs through the State election, Narracan supplementary election, and the federal Division of Aston by-election. Monitoring, reducing and preventing divergence between the Commonwealth and State registers of electors for Victoria remains a goal of the JRMC. We are pleased to say that divergence continues to trend downwards.

VEC enrolment programs

Under section 26 of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC receives or can request information from specified organisations to support the preparation, maintenance or review of the Victorian register of electors. We receive data from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) which enables the VEC to identify and remove deceased persons from the register of electors. The Department of Justice and Community Safety provide data relating to prisoners who are serving a sentence of 5 years or more, who under section 48(2)(b) of the *Constitution Act 1975 (Vic)* are not entitled to be enrolled as an elector.

To maintain the accuracy of the register of electors, the VEC has a range of strategic programs to help Victorians enrol or update their enrolment. The VEC undertakes regular direct enrolment of eligible persons, using data sourced from the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). The VEC also uses several measures to encourage individuals to update their enrolment details, including SMS and email campaigns.

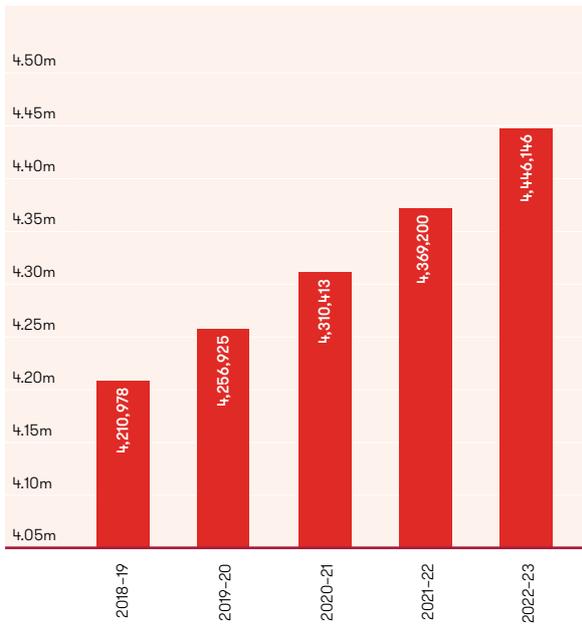
The VEC also uses information provided by the VCAA to run its youth enrolment program, which encourages and assists young people to enrol. The program includes:

- ▶ Sending birthday cards with enrolment information to all Victorian students turning 17, inviting them to provisionally enrol under section 22(5) of the Electoral Act; this year the VEC sent birthday cards to 51,697 young people which resulted in 6,927 (13.4%) provisional enrolments.
- ▶ Sending youth brochures to provisionally enrolled 17-year-olds to explain how voting and enrolment works in Federal, State and local government elections in Victoria; the VEC sent youth brochures to 5,514 newly enrolled young electors this year.
- ▶ A direct enrolment campaign for 18-year-old school leavers who have not yet enrolled; this year 2,838 school leavers were enrolled by the VEC through the program.

Enrolled electors

The number of Victorians enrolled to vote on the register of electors increased over the year by 76,946 (1.8%) to 4,446,146 as at 30 June 2023.

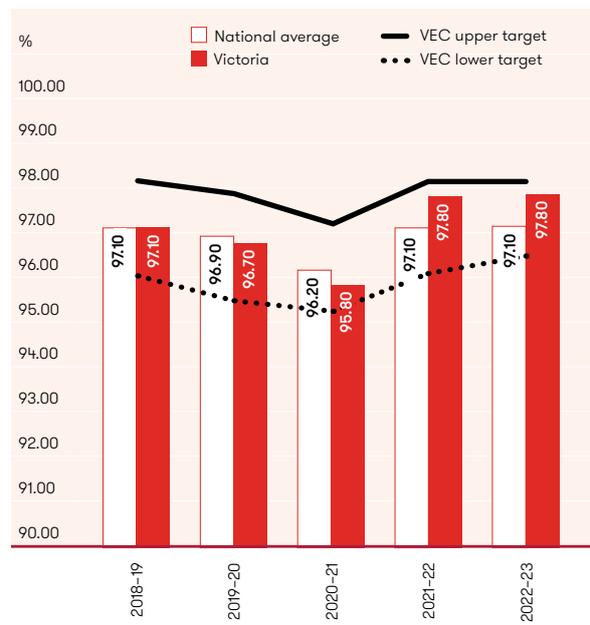
Figure 13: Total number of enrolled Victorians as at 30 June 2019 to 2023



Victorian enrolment rate

Using available data, it is estimated that the enrolment rate for Victoria at 30 June 2023 was 97.90%. This is within our target of +/-1% variation from the national enrolment rate which was 97.50%. The enrolment rate has increased by 0.10 percentage points since 30 June 2022.

Figure 14: Proportion of eligible population enrolled as at 30 June 2019 to 2023[^]



[^] Note: enrolment rates for 2018-19 to 2020-21 were shown in previous annual reports using a different methodology, as detailed in the 2021-22 annual report. The figures shown above reflect the current methodology.

Register of electors cont.

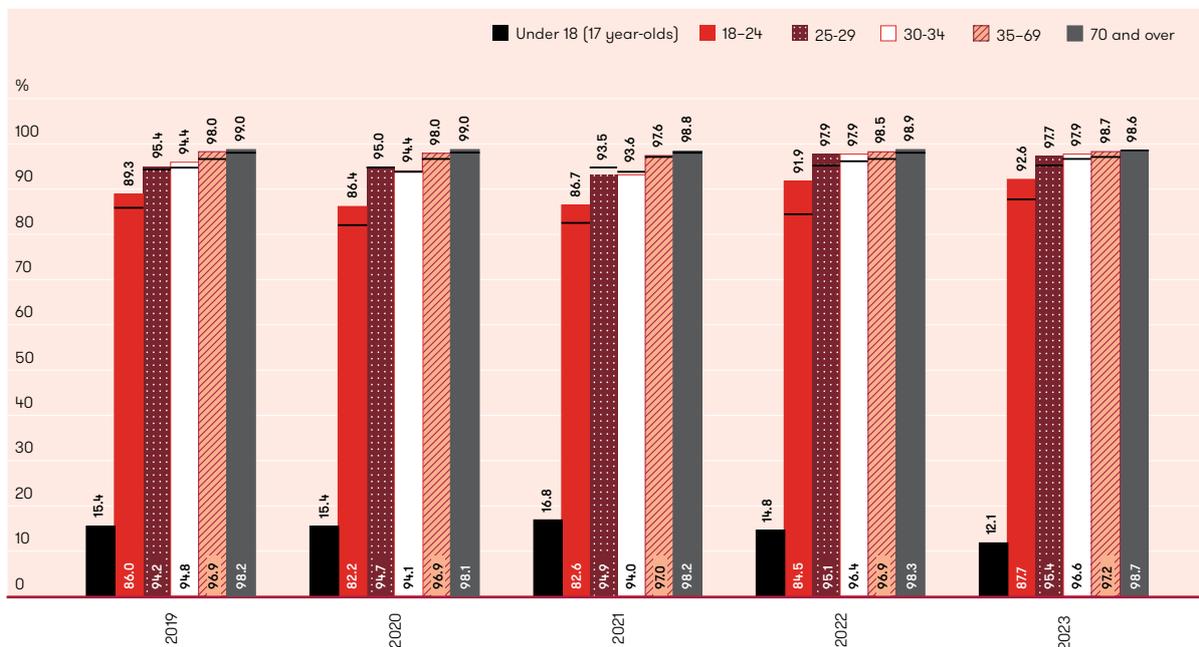
Enrolment rate by age

Enrolments across each age range increased during the year compared to 30 June 2022, with the exception of under 18 provisionally enrolled electors.

The VEC has implemented targets for enrolment rates for defined age ranges. This was in response to the recommendation from the Electoral Matters Committee ‘That the VEC establish performance targets relating to the proportion of people in different age brackets who are enrolled. This will enable it to track its progress in this area’. The benchmark that has been set is that ‘the Victorian enrolment rate for each identified age cohort is at least the average of the federal enrolment rate, and the states and territories, for the equivalent cohort’.

In figure 15 the text on the bottom of the columns represent the target enrolment rate, which is shown visually with a black line. The actual enrolment rate is the text in black at the top of the columns and is shown visually by the column. There is no target rate for under 18s.

Figure 15: Enrolment rate and target enrolment rate by age range as at 30 June 2019 to 2023[^]



[^] Note: enrolment rates greater than 99% are not reported due to errors associated with calculating estimated eligible population which may overstate the actual enrolment rate.

Table 21: Enrolment transactions as at 30 June 2019 to 2023

VEC ENROLMENT PROGRAM TRANSACTIONS¹	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New to roll	5,868	17,388	19,795	19,490	11,994
Reinstatements	254	68	175	42	156
Removals	39,028	41,390	45,478	43,335	47,209
Change of details	3,368	1,331	537	388	568
Total	48,518	60,177	65,985	63,255	59,927

Table 22: Joint enrolment program transactions

JOINT ENROLMENT PROGRAM TRANSACTIONS	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New to roll	157,863	100,959	111,400	124,461	140,616
Reinstatements	43,704	16,949	22,273	29,853	33,417
Removals	66,283	57,189	68,648	83,601	72,704
Change of details	556,491	349,859	474,262	511,283	466,009
Total	824,341	524,956	676,583	749,198	712,746

Table 23: Other enrolment-related transactions and outreach activities

OTHER ENROLMENT-RELATED TRANSACTIONS AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Special category applications ²	24,6223 ³	487	584	1,269	71,278
Provisional enrolment (17-year-olds)	10,680	9,766	12,420	9,257	6,927
Other enrolment campaigns	13,378	619	8,384	1,907	4,712

¹ The VEC processes enrolment transactions using information from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the Department of Transport and Planning, and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. From 24 July 2020 direct enrolment transactions from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) are being directly accepted and are now reported under joint enrolment program transactions.

² Special category applications received by the VEC include: applications to become General Postal Voters (GPVs), silent electors, itinerant or eligible overseas electors. Some of these transactions are processed by the VEC and some are passed to the AEC for processing under the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

³ A General Postal Voter campaign was promoted by some candidates and registered political parties within the 6 weeks leading up to the close of roll for the 2018 State election, targeting electors 70 years of age or older. This led to a large-scale increase in GPV applications during this period.

Register of electors cont.

Roll management system redevelopment

The VEC's Roll Management System (RMS) is a technology platform that enables the Commission to maintain the register of electors and create electoral rolls and other roll products.

In March 2020, the VEC commenced a project to replace RMS. Detailed technical analysis through the second half of 2022 led to a decision that the best course of action was to conduct this project as a technical upgrade of the current system. This upgrade will ensure the system is future-proofed to be secure, stable and provides the capability for future enhancements. The VEC has commenced procurement of a vendor to conduct this upgrade using specialist migration tools and technology.

Geospatial services

The VEC's delivery of geospatial products and services is guided by the Geospatial Strategy 2021-24, which aims to use geospatial intelligence in the delivery of high-quality electoral services to support Victorians to actively participate in their democracy. In 2022-23, we:

- ▶ Maintained ongoing access to a range of spatial tools and datasets, including electoral boundaries, statistics and a Victorian address dictionary. This enables the VEC to accurately analyse voter information relating to the elector's enrolled address.
- ▶ Delivered the Voting Centre Locator application hosted on the VEC website for the 2022 State election. This application was used by 1.8 million users from inside and outside Victoria. The application was able to reflect time and location changes quickly, so electors were able to find their nearest voting location accurately.
- ▶ Collaborated with Emergency Management Victoria to provide analysis of voters affected by flooding in the lead-up to the 2022 State election. This allowed those electors to access telephone assisted voting services.
- ▶ Redeveloped the Public Submission tool (with mapping component) for upcoming local government electoral structure and ward boundary review programs. This tool gives all submitters access to data and spatial tools to create draft electoral models.
- ▶ Provided up-to-date data (including flood areas and emergency road closures) in our internal web-based map browser to support enrolment team, election services, education, outreach and research teams in their work targeting services for electors.
- ▶ Provided VEC-developed boundary modelling software ('BoundaryMaker') to NTEC and the AEC to assist with redistribution programs.

Elector statistics by region, 30 June 2023

Elector statistics by region for 2022–23 appear below:

- ▶ Total number of electorates: 8
- ▶ Total number of electors: 4,446,146
- ▶ Average number of electors per region: 555,768

Table 24: Elector statistics by region, 30 June 2023

REGION	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)
Eastern Victoria	550,756	-0.9
North-Eastern Metropolitan	549,170	-1.19
Northern Metropolitan	561,266	0.99
Northern Victoria	544,919	-1.95
South-Eastern Metropolitan	562,951	1.29
Southern Metropolitan	546,144	-1.73
Western Metropolitan	553,986	-0.32
Western Victoria	576,954	3.81

Register of electors cont.

Elector statistics by district, 30 June 2023

Elector statistics by district for 2022–23 appear below:

- ▶ Total number of electorates: 88
- ▶ Total number of electors: 4,446,146
- ▶ Average number of electors per district: 50,524

Table 25: Elector statistics by district, 30 June 2023

DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)	DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)
Albert Park	48,988	-3.04	Cranbourne	52,558	4.03
Ashwood	51,523	1.98	Croydon	52,940	4.78
Bass	50,931	0.81	Dandenong	51,459	1.85
Bayswater	49,991	-1.05	Eildon	50,112	-0.82
Bellarine	55,498	9.84	Eltham	48,946	-3.12
Benambra	50,366	-0.31	Essendon	49,986	-1.06
Bendigo East	52,954	4.81	Eureka	54,722	8.31
Bendigo West	48,123	-4.75	Euroa	50,391	-0.26
Bentleigh	52,048	3.02	Evelyn	50,616	0.18
Berwick	54,016	6.91	Footscray	49,625	-1.78
Box Hill	50,829	0.60	Frankston	49,392	-2.24
Brighton	48,625	-3.76	Geelong	52,445	3.80
Broadmeadows	48,974	-3.07	Gippsland East	50,125	-0.79
Brunswick	52,865	4.63	Gippsland South	49,864	-1.31
Bulleen	50,492	-0.06	Glen Waverley	50,771	0.49
Bundoora	47,745	-5.50	Greenvale	51,074	1.09
Carrum	51,888	2.70	Hastings	48,844	-3.33
Caulfield	48,898	-3.22	Hawthorn	50,328	-0.39
Clarinda	48,682	-3.65	Ivanhoe	47,264	-6.45

DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)	DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)
Kalkallo	55,724	10.29	Ovens Valley	48,348	-4.31
Kew	50,046	-0.95	Pakenham	49,283	-2.46
Kororoit	52,862	4.63	Pascoe Vale	49,121	-2.78
Lara	49,508	-2.01	Point Cook	51,713	2.35
Laverton	50,403	-0.24	Polwarth	53,126	5.15
Lowan	51,214	1.37	Prahran	49,241	-2.54
Macedon	48,263	-4.48	Preston	50,857	0.66
Malvern	47,236	-6.51	Richmond	48,795	-3.42
Melbourne	54,323	7.52	Ringwood	52,520	3.95
Melton	51,849	2.62	Ripon	51,201	1.34
Mildura	48,380	-4.24	Rowville	49,815	-1.40
Mill Park	46,578	-7.81	Sandringham	46,778	-7.41
Monbulk	48,487	-4.03	Shepparton	50,696	0.34
Mordialloc	51,223	1.38	South Barwon	53,104	5.11
Mornington	48,370	-4.26	South-West Coast	53,295	5.48
Morwell	54,091	7.06	St Albans	46,852	-7.27
Mulgrave	47,301	-6.38	Sunbury	46,454	-8.06
Murray Plains	48,416	-4.17	Sydenham	54,752	8.37
Narracan	51,126	1.19	Tarneit	51,459	1.85
Narre Warren North	52,236	3.39	Thomastown	48,965	-3.09
Narre Warren South	54,381	7.63	Warrandyte	51,096	1.13
Nepean	49,017	-2.98	Wendouree	50,992	0.93
Niddrie	50,379	-0.29	Werribee	52,953	4.81
Northcote	50,582	0.11	Williamstown	46,534	-7.90
Oakleigh	52,433	3.78	Yan Yean	48,870	-3.27

Register of electors cont.

Provision of enrolment information

The register of electors contains personal enrolment information, including name, address, date of birth and gender. The Electoral Act strictly regulates the way the VEC collects, uses and discloses enrolment information. Protecting the privacy of electors' personal enrolment information is of fundamental importance to the VEC, and information is only disclosed as required or authorised by legislation.

Mandatory provision of enrolment information

The *Electoral Act 2002* sets out several circumstances in which enrolment information must be made available and how it must be made available.

- ▶ The list of Victorian electors (names and addresses only), excluding silent electors, must be made available for public inspection at the offices of the VEC and updated every 6 months. Information can only be searched by name.
- ▶ The latest print of any electoral roll produced for an election (which contains name and address details only) must be made available for public inspection, free of charge, at locations and during times determined by the VEC.
- ▶ Enrolment information, excluding silent electors, must be provided to registered political parties and Members of Parliament for permitted purposes.
- ▶ A copy of the electoral roll, excluding silent electors, is provided to candidates for an election.
- ▶ Enrolment information is also provided under other legislation. Under section 19 of the *Juries Act 2000*, the VEC provides lists to Juries Victoria of people who are eligible for jury service, and processes exemptions from jury service on a monthly basis. A total of 44 jury rolls were provided under this legislation during 2022–23.

The VEC also shares enrolment information with councils for the purposes of local government elections. The VEC and councils share enrolment information pursuant to Part 8 of the LGA 2020, and as required under regulation 15 of the *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020* for the purposes of preparing accurate voters' rolls.

Section 254 of the *Local Government Act 2020* provides for the release of enrolment information (a copy of the voters' roll) to the CEO of a council on request. The voters' roll can be used for the purpose of communicating or consulting with the municipal community in relation to the performance of the council's functions. In 2022–23 the VEC did not receive any requests to release information under this provision.

Discretionary provision of enrolment information

Section 34 of the Electoral Act allows the VEC to release enrolment information with other organisations in defined circumstances. The VEC may enter into an information sharing deed with an applicant. This occurs when the public interest in providing the requested information outweighs the public interest in protecting the privacy of personal information. Strict conditions regulate the provision of information and penalties apply for non-compliance or misuse of enrolment information.

The VEC is also required to report on any provision of this information to ensure transparency when dealing with electors' personal information.

Enrolment information was provided to 6 organisations under existing agreements subject to section 34 of the Electoral Act (Table 26). A standing agreement has been in place with Victoria Police since 2005, which allows immediate secure access to the register of electors.

Table 26: Information provided to organisations under section 34 of the Electoral Act, 2022-23*

ORGANISATION	LOOK UPS REQUESTED	UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCHES	INFORMATION PROVIDED
Adoption Information Service (previously Family Information Networks and Discovery)	88	31	57
Anglicare Victoria	4	1	3
Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority	19	7	12
BreastScreen	(List of electors within relevant cohort provided quarterly)		
State Revenue Office	(List of electors provided monthly)		
Victoria Police	14,041 searches		

* For more information around the purpose of these agreements, please visit: vec.vic.gov.au/privacy/release-of-enrolment-information

Advertising

The VEC published 3 statutory advertisements across one local newspaper and one statutory notice in one major daily newspaper during the 2022 Narracan Supplementary election. All printed material was developed in-house.

Nine statutory advertisements were published across 7 local newspapers and 2 major daily newspapers in relation to the 2022–23 local council electoral structures review program. All printed material was developed in-house.

The VEC also published statutory advertising for 3 local government by-elections and 20 countbacks. A total of 102 statutory and non-statutory advertisements (including reminder advertisements) were published. This includes RPP notices.

2022 State election advertising campaign

The VEC conducted a statewide advertising campaign from August to November 2022 to promote participation in the 2022 State election.

The campaign featured a refresh of the 2018 animated campaign, the Paper People. Additionally, several sub-campaigns were developed to address specific messages or engage targeted audiences. These included:

- ▶ *Sorting fact from fiction*, a media literacy campaign aimed at increasing public awareness of electoral mis- and disinformation and provide tips on how to critically consume information
- ▶ *DemGraphics*, a digital campaign targeting young and directly-enrolled voters
- ▶ *Mythbusting* and *Voting Matters* campaigns aimed at increasing enrolment and participation of people experiencing homelessness.

The main statewide campaign was divided into 3 basic phases: enrolment, early voting, and voting correctly/ voting assistance. Each phase was supported by advertisements through multiple channels including TV, radio, outdoor, digital media, social media, and newspapers (press) and were translated for culturally and linguistically diverse communication platforms.

Media services

The VEC maintains an open and informative relationship with Victorian media outlets. Throughout 2022–23, the VEC provided metropolitan and regional media outlets with media releases around local government electoral events (including by-elections and countbacks) and the 2022 State election. The VEC also distributed media releases regarding its register of political parties, including de-registrations of political parties and applications to change parties' names or logos. The VEC distributed a total of 200 media releases, including a small number of media statements and advisories, throughout 2022–23.

The VEC commits to responding to all media queries within 3 business days. In 2022–23, the VEC responded to 604 media enquiries, with 513 resolved on the same business day, 63 resolved within one business day, 9 resolved within 2 business days, 6 resolved within 3 business days and 13 resolved in more than 3 business days.

In 2022–23, the VEC also provided administrative support to the ERAPs, which included media services. The aim of the media campaign was to drive awareness of, and participation in, public consultation on changes to Victoria's local government electoral structures.

The other key media campaign included the 2022 State election. The focus was to increase news coverage, as well as drive awareness of, and participation in, the election.

During the 2022 State election period (1 September to 31 December 2022), the VEC issued 56 statewide media releases, responded to 460 media queries and conducted 50 media interviews (radio and TV).

Selections: the VEC newsletter

'Selections' is the VEC's annual stakeholder newsletter. It is distributed to state and local government representatives, government departments, the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) of Parliament, VEC employees, senior election officials and registered political parties. The 2022 edition was published in October and highlighted key activities from 2021–22. The newsletter was distributed digitally through e-marketing software, with the stories hosted on the VEC website. The stories received a combined 1,570 views.

Social media

The VEC's social media channels continue to be a critical medium for community outreach, education and engagement, as well as publicising information about electoral events such as the 2022 State election and local government by-elections.

In 2022–23, the VEC strengthened its focus on addressing misinformation and disinformation aimed at undermining trust and confidence in Victoria's electoral system in the lead-up to the 2022 State election.

Over the course of the year, the VEC published 296 tweets (plus 1,948 replies to other Twitter users), 951 Facebook posts, 179 Instagram posts and 63 LinkedIn posts, generating over 156,000 visits to the website. Most of these came from Facebook (110,905), followed by Twitter (35,384). During the election period (1 September to 31 December 2022), the VEC recorded over 275,000 mentions (likes, replies and shares) and more than 45,000 engagements (likes, comments and shares).

VEC website

The VEC website continues to be the first point of contact with the VEC for hundreds of thousands of Victorians each year. People visit the website to obtain information about election events, perform enrolment transactions, and learn about the VEC's programs and activities.

In 2022–23, a total of 4,184,925 users visited the VEC website, and 70.9% of these visits were made via a mobile device.

The website went into live 'election mode' between 18 July and 16 December 2022. It was a major source of factual information relating to all aspects of the election, including:

- ▶ enrolment and voting information for voters
- ▶ information on nominations, how-to-vote cards and general information for candidates, parties and scrutineers
- ▶ a voting centre locator to assist users to find their nearest voting centre or election office (with directions and accessibility ratings)
- ▶ short animations and explainer videos on everything from how to enrol and vote, to how proportional representation works at state elections
- ▶ translated content and enrolment forms in 20 languages
- ▶ a total of 50 in-language videos across 25 languages (including Auslan): 2 per language, demonstrating how to enrol and vote

- ▶ an interactive map for voters to discover if their address was affected by electoral boundary changes (old and new boundaries were depicted)
- ▶ a media centre for journalists to obtain media releases, images for use in stories, maps of the electorates and a media handbook.

VoterAlert

In 2022–23, the VEC's VoterAlert notification service was successfully used to send key election reminders to State-enrolled electors by SMS, email or both for the 2022 State election, Narracan District supplementary election, 3 local council by-elections and 3 electoral representation reviews.

In the lead-up to the State election, the VEC sent messages to 2.4 million electors including:

- ▶ the close of roll date
- ▶ a digital EasyVote Guide before the start of the early voting period
- ▶ an election day reminder.

Smaller VoterAlert campaigns were used to reach:

- ▶ directly enrolled electors
- ▶ electors who had become Australian citizens since May 2022
- ▶ electors over 70 who may be eligible to become general postal voters
- ▶ registered overseas electors
- ▶ electors who had missed the close of roll or the postal vote application deadline
- ▶ flood-affected electors
- ▶ electors in Narracan District advising of the failed election and reminding them of their responsibility to vote for their candidates in Eastern Victoria Region
- ▶ apparent non-voters who received an Apparent Failure to Vote Notice after the 2022 State election.

Across council elections VoterAlert reminders were sent to State-enrolled electors about:

- ▶ the close of roll date
- ▶ the ballot pack mail-out period
- ▶ the last week to return completed ballot material.

VoterAlert will continue to be deployed at all future elections to raise awareness and increase participation.

Research and development

The VEC conducts research and development activity on an ongoing basis. A research policy plan guides the conduct of research relating to service delivery and electoral participation across a range of stakeholder groups.

2022 State election

An important focus of VEC research was its part in preparing, monitoring and evaluating the 2022 State election. This was achieved mainly through voter surveys, development of reputation metrics, data analysis, and research assistance provided to other teams. Analysis and reporting of election results and data, particularly voter participation, will continue throughout 2023. To date, research and analysis of election results has included reporting on various Electoral Matters Committee recommendations and planning for a major study on voter participation.

As in previous states elections, an independent evaluation of voting services was required to provide an objective measure of the VEC's performance during the event. For 2022 Kantar Public was contracted to conduct this work. The evaluation involved research with voters, candidates and representatives of registered political parties to collect feedback and determine overall levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the election service delivery. Voter surveys were designed so results by voting method and demographic factors could be compared, while consistency with previous evaluative work enabled similar comparisons to be made over time. The full Report to Parliament on the conduct of the election can be found on the VEC's website.

Online Research Panel

In August 2022 the VEC recruited a new sample of Victorian electors to be part of its Online Research Panel (ORP). The ORP provided valuable information in the lead-up to the election, in relation to voter preferences, media misinformation/disinformation and VEC integrity measures. The ORP was also used to monitor public perceptions of the VEC's performance and integrity throughout the election, and enabled responsive monitoring of emerging issues. Follow-up surveys on particular topics were conducted with voters after the election and the survey platform was adapted for use to engage and collect feedback from other stakeholders, such as journalists and media commentators.

Use of the ORP has systemically embedded the voice of voters into VEC communication and service design and is a growing part of the VEC's research capability. While some minor system improvements were made in June–July 2022, increasing familiarity and expertise operating the system was noted. The developments being implemented in time for a new panel to be recruited by July 2023 will further enhance the value and role of the ORP.

Electoral Regulation Research Network

The VEC joined with the New South Wales Electoral Commission and the University of Melbourne in March 2012 to establish the Electoral Regulation Research Network (ERRN). The purpose of ERRN is to foster exchange and discussion among academics, electoral commissions and other interested groups on research relating to electoral regulation.

ERRN hosts or sponsors various seminars and workshops, available in most cases to attend in-person or online. These events covered topics such as the voting age in Australia, US elections, political parties and the courts, political lobbying regulation and the launch of a report on digital campaigning and political finance in Asia and the Pacific. The 7th Biennial ERRN workshop was held at the Australian National University in December 2022, which included panel discussions on the 2022 federal election, the 'Voice' referendum vote, global trends in electoral regulation and a roundtable of Electoral Commissioners.

2022–23 has been the final year for Professor Joo-Cheong Tham (University of Melbourne Law School) as Director of ERRN, with Associate Professor Tom Daly to assume the role from 1 July 2023. The VEC acknowledges and thanks Professor Tham for his professionalism, commitment and knowledge in establishing and expanding the network.

Australian Research Council partnership on informal voting

The VEC continued to work in partnership with the University of Adelaide and Flinders University as part of a 4-year ARC linkage study on informal voting in Victoria. The collaborative study addresses the issue of informal voting at both State and local government levels over 3 election periods. An analysis of all informal votes cast at the 2022 State election, some 335,000 ballots in total, marks the VEC's most substantial contribution to the study so far. At the same time, the VEC assisted the university research team to design and distribute a survey about informal voting, which was completed by nearly 30,000 individual voters. The final instalment of informal voting data will be provided following the 2024 local government elections.

The VEC's financial commitment to the research over 4 years is \$60,000 plus an in-kind contribution equivalent to \$214,050. The study is due to be completed in April 2025.

ROGER MILLAR

Title: Client Liaison Officer
Branch: Elections – Local Government and Fee-for-Service team



STATE ELECTORAL OFFICE VICTORIA

SPOTLIGHT ON...

How does your role contribute to the vision of the VEC?

I am currently working as a client liaison officer in the Local Government and Fee-for-Service Team. But I've worked for the VEC for over 49 years in wide variety of roles. My current role involves working closely and collaboratively with councils on the conduct of their general elections, by-elections, and countbacks. Local Governments are an often-overlooked level of government in Australia and because the vision of the VEC is all Victorians actively participating in democracy it's especially satisfying to contribute to an under-loved level of that democracy. The role also involves planning and conducting elections for a number of fee-for-service clients – ranging from private societies, industry bodies and other groups who need high quality elections.

What makes the VEC an innovative and engaging place to work?

Delivering elections is such important and high-profile work and it is very rewarding to be involved. The demands of conducting elections are continually changing and the staff always work together to resolve any unforeseen issues. After each election the VEC undertakes a review of electoral processes and implements changes wherever improvements can be made. This process of constant change is what makes elections so interesting to me after nearly 49 years of being involved.

What was a lesson you learned from working on the 2022 State election?

I worked with the how-to-vote card (HTVC) registration team for the first time and I learnt there are a lot of HTVCs submitted during the registration period. These HTVCs are the bits of paper candidates hand out to you on election day encouraging you to vote in a particular way so they are a very visible part of the election. Each card must be very carefully reviewed on the day it is received and a decision made on whether to register the card by 12 noon the next day. HTVCs can be submitted by political parties, individual candidates and interested persons or groups. This was a huge task and key staff had to work very long hours to meet the daily 12 noon deadline during the week of the registration period so there was a great deal of care that went into finishing the work correctly and in the strict timeframe.

What do you like to do outside of work?

My favourite things to do on a weekend are going to the football (Go Pies!), playing golf and bike riding around the Yarra trail.

Our stakeholders

ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-23



Collaborated with the broad range of community stakeholders and VEC Community Advisory Groups to support the engagement of under-represented groups in the 2022 State election.



Used the VEC Statement on Self-determination and Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians to develop a program logic for the development of an Aboriginal Inclusion Plan.



Establishment of the new VEC Young People Advisory Group.



Delivered Passport to Democracy education sessions to 24,477 students to build civics and electoral knowledge in young people.



Enabled the participation of 36 young people who represent VEC priority communities in the YMCA Vic Youth Parliament program to develop policy and advocacy skills in the next generation of leaders.



Sponsored the Victorian Multicultural Commission film festival and civic engagement workshops for CALD community leaders.

OUTLOOK 2023-24



Using the VEC Statement Self-determination and Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians Policy to guide the development of a new VEC Aboriginal Inclusion Plan.



Finalising all current VEC inclusion plans and develop the next plans in alignment with Strategy 2027.



Successfully sponsoring and hosting the Electoral Research and Regulation Network's booked out 2-day conference in August 2023 with the University of Melbourne.



Launching the education program on enrolling and voting for people in custody.



Launching the education program on voting rights for people in custody.



Receiving and responding to the report of the Electoral Matters Committee into the conduct of the 2022 State election.

Inclusion and participation

The VEC understands the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure all Victorians can actively participate in their democracy. The VEC has inclusion plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people living with disabilities, multicultural communities, young people and people in prison or without a home. These plans aim to improve electoral engagement of under-represented communities and better support the inclusion practices of the VEC's staff.

Inclusion of Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal inclusion plan

An Aboriginal Inclusion Plan is being developed, guided by the VEC *Statement on Self Determination and Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians*. Work over the year has focused on building strong relationships with Aboriginal Elders, community leaders and members. Internally, the VEC completed a program logic to support development of a new Aboriginal Inclusion Plan. The next step is to work with the Aboriginal Advisory Group members, Aboriginal Elders and community leaders to collaboratively develop a plan in collaboration with the ideas and expertise of Aboriginal people.

This year the VEC worked with Aboriginal communities, Elders and leaders to provide new initiatives for the 2022 State election. For the first time Aboriginal communities hosted culturally safe mobile enrolment and voting sessions at 6 Aboriginal organisations across Victoria (Mildura, Frankston, Geelong, Sale, Morwell and Wyndham Vale). Aboriginal Advisory Group Elders mentored and supported young Aboriginal Democracy Ambassadors (DAs). The DAs worked at community events to make electoral information more accessible and relevant to Aboriginal people in Victoria.

ECANZ Indigenous engagement working group

The VEC continues to be represented on the ECANZ Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group, which shares information and ideas to better support the electoral engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. The group had 4 meetings and discussed strategies to increase employment of Aboriginal people in head office and election roles, impacts of fines for non-voting on community members, and improved data to plan and evaluate the effectiveness of improving outcomes for Aboriginal Australians.

Aboriginal youth leadership democracy ambassador camp

In 2023, the VEC's Aboriginal inclusion team invited 12 young leaders (including DAs) and other emerging community youth leaders on a Youth Leadership camp. The camp took place on Wurundjeri country and was hosted by distinguished Wurundjeri leader, Aunty Mandy Nicholson. Several partners attended the camp including young Wurundjeri women from the Djirri Djirri dance group, one of the VEC's Advisory Group Elders, Uncle Andrew Jackomos, and representatives from Reconciliation Victoria, Yoorook Justice Commission, Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), First Peoples Assembly, Melbourne University Atlantic Fellowship Indigenous Social Cohesion and the Korin Gamadji Institute.

Figure 16: Left to Right: Jeremy Nikora, VEC Aboriginal Inclusion Officer, Meena Singh, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos, VEC Aboriginal Advisory Group Elder and Inaugural Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People



Figure 17: Korin Gamadji Institute's Advanced Leadership Group



Korin Gamadji Institute's Richmond Emerging Aboriginal Leaders program

The VEC is now in its 11th year of ongoing partnership with the Richmond Football Club's Korin Gamadji Institute (KGI). This year, school sessions, leadership camps and community outreach opportunities were provided to 75 young people via KGI. A further 20 young people were engaged through other partner organisations. 5 young Aboriginal DAs from the KGI alumni worked during the 2022 State election.

Inclusion of multicultural communities

Multicultural Inclusion Plan

In its 3rd year of implementation, the VEC has delivered 20 of the total 26 actions in the multicultural inclusion plan 2020–23, including:

- ▶ completion of a partnership with Leadership Victoria for an Active Citizenship Leadership Program. 51 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community leaders participated in the Program, 34 of whom were invited to be part of the Democracy Ambassador program.
- ▶ 51 CALD community leaders and members trained as DAs to deliver voter education sessions to their own and broader CALD communities. DAs spoke 44 languages and dialects (including Auslan) and delivered 79 in-language sessions for the 2022 State election.
- ▶ delivery of 75 in-language videos in 25 languages including Auslan to support people with low English proficiency to enrol and vote in the 2022 State election
- ▶ sponsorship of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) Cultural Diversity Week including the Multicultural Film Festival in August and a Taste of Harmony event where VEC staff cooked and shared their favourite cultural dishes together.

Figure 18: Cultural engagement at a community event in Melton



Active citizenship electoral education for cultural and linguistically diverse communities

The VEC delivered 2 active citizenship workshops to 25 CALD community leaders and ethno-specific service providers. The aim of these workshops was to enhance electoral literacy skills and knowledge for community leaders and service providers who support CALD community members. The VEC attended 33 community network meetings, engagements and events.

Talking Democracy online resource

The VEC continues to offer the Talking Democracy resource kit to CALD communities and English-language learning centres. In 2022–23, there were:

- ▶ 561 visits to the landing page
- ▶ 888 views of the 'Three levels of government' video
- ▶ 186 views of the 'Enrolling and voting' video
- ▶ 558 downloads of various components
- ▶ 60 hard copies of the resource mailed to community groups, English-language learning centres and democracy ambassadors.

Inclusion and participation cont.

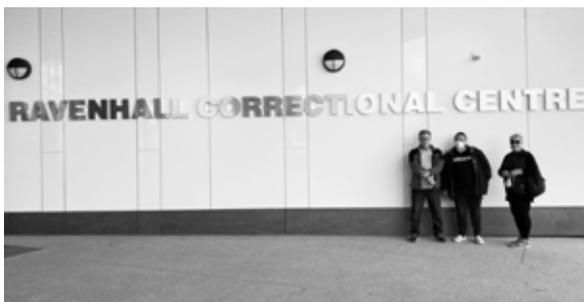
Inclusion of people experiencing homelessness or incarceration

Prison and Without a Home Action Plan

In the first year of implementation of the Prison and Without a Home Action Plan 2021–23, 5 of 18 total actions have been delivered, including:

- ▶ launching the ‘Voting Matters’ campaign in collaboration with The Big Issue to encourage people experiencing homelessness to rethink their level of engagement in electoral matters by using real people who shared their views as to why voting matters
- ▶ reigniting the MythBusting campaign for the 2022 State election to address misinformation about electoral engagement for people experiencing homelessness
- ▶ sponsoring StreetSmart, which allowed the provision of election-related information along with meals
- ▶ distributing the Victorian Prison Guide during mobile enrolment and voting outreach sessions
- ▶ visiting 14 prisons across metropolitan and regional Victoria to help eligible inmates to enrol and vote in the 2022 State election.

Figure 19: Democracy ambassadors outside Ravenhall Correctional Centre assisting in the State election mobile voting program



Inclusion of people with disabilities

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

This was the 4th and last implementation year of the VEC’s Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2019–23. The VEC has completed 37 out of 50 actions in the Plan, 4 actions have been classified as superseded, either due to personnel and resource shortages, or interruptions due to COVID. The remaining 9 actions are underway for completion by December 2023.

This year:

- ▶ significant improvements were made to physical access for early voting centres for the 2022 State election
- ▶ Easy English guides were developed including a guide on disinformation, ‘*Sorting fact from fiction*’
- ▶ curriculum-aligned resources were developed in collaboration with teachers for use in specialist and special development schools for students with a disability
- ▶ 15 Democracy Ambassadors with lived experience of disability were trained to deliver electoral education sessions across Victoria.

Regional visits to specialist schools

The start of the 2023 school year saw a renewed focus by the VEC to engage with and support young Victorians in specialist school settings. The VEC delivered 8 sessions across metropolitan Melbourne and 6 sessions across regional Victoria including Suni TAFE and the Christie Centre in Mildura, the Ballarat Specialist School and the South Gippsland and Portland Specialist Schools. These sessions help young people understand what enrolment means and that if they can make decisions independently or with support, they can vote. Lively discussions are held about the various supports available including asking a friend, family member, election official or disability support worker for help to fill in the ballot paper.

Inclusion of young people

Young People Inclusion Plan

For the VEC Young People Inclusion Plan 2021–23, 20 of a total of 28 actions have been delivered, including:

- ▶ the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Plan
- ▶ the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Foundation for Young Australians which sees the VEC providing support and advice for the Young Mayors Program in Horsham
- ▶ the DemGraphics social media campaign targeting young people during 2022 State election
- ▶ recruitment and training of 14 young Democracy Ambassadors for the 2022 State election
- ▶ sponsorship of the Youth Affairs Council Victoria to support provision of information for young people about enrolling and voting on the Youth Engagement Resources Project website
- ▶ design and delivery of a face-to-face Passport to Democracy professional learning event focusing on civics and citizenship resources for 45 Victorian school teachers and community educators.

YMCA Victoria youth parliament

The VEC partnered with YMCA Victoria for the 2023 youth parliament. Victorian youth parliamentarians engage in a range of personal and professional development sessions and are supported in writing a bill which addresses a state-based issue that they would like to see changed or added into Victorian legislation. This year the VEC sponsored 6 teams (each including 6 young people) drawn from communities of young people aged from 15 to 25 years representing Daylesford College, Korin Gamadji Institute, Mildura Rural City Council, Orbost Secondary College, Pasefika Navigators (including young people from Brimbank, Wyndham, Melton, Whittlesea and Greater Shepparton) and Wellington Shire Council.

Passport to Democracy

The Passport to Democracy (PTD) program addresses the electoral education needs of schools and young people. This year the PTD program provided resources to 418 schools and reached a total of 24,477 students. Of the 75 organisations who booked formal incursions, 36 were government schools, 14 Catholic, 16 independent and a further 9 from tertiary and non-school settings.

Services to candidates and political parties

Party registration function

On 16 May 2022, following an internal restructure, administration of the party registration activities transitioned from the Elections Branch to the Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch. This restructure reflects the dual role of the VEC as regulator and administrator and enhances both functions through separating the process of registering political parties from the process of engaging and educating political parties and candidates.

2022 State election services to candidates and registered political parties

In advance of the 2022 State election, the VEC held briefings and information sessions for prospective candidates and for RPP audiences and an independent candidate briefing to alert parties and candidates to matters important for their election preparation. The briefings summarised relevant legislation and recent legislative changes, the VEC's active regulatory role, information about the election timeline, changes to the VEC's footprint for early and election day voting as well as various election services and counting activities, and the channels available for support.

All registered officers of registered political parties were invited to meet with the VEC for the first round of briefings in March 2022 and a subsequent round of briefings, also capturing any newly registered political parties, in September to November 2022. All registered political parties attended at least one briefing, including those parties registered shortly before the election writs were issued.

An online information session for independent candidates was broadcast on Sunday 30 October 2022 and attracted 106 attendees. The information session was recorded and later made available via the VEC's website, receiving 342 views.

From the opening of the 2022 State election offices, the central point of contact for independent candidates with the VEC was through their local election manager where they could seek support and updates on the election process. Each election manager sent candidate bulletins containing updates to all candidates in their district to ensure the provision of timely messages on voting and counting.

Similarly, registered political parties had access to a dedicated candidate helpdesk for guidance on lodging nominations, applying to register HTVCs, and other enquiries during the election.

The VEC issued 15 bulletins to independent, registered political parties and Legislative Council election candidates at regular intervals to provide updates on salient matters, including the voting and counting timeline.

Services to local government candidates

To support candidates standing for local government by-elections, the VEC held online candidate information sessions for prospective candidates to provide guidance on the requirements to stand as a candidate.

At all times of the year, prospective local government candidates can access dedicated support from the VEC's candidate helpdesk. From the opening of each by-election office, candidates could seek support in-person directly by the VEC's local election manager to guide them through their nomination and provide updates on the election process.

Candidate Handbooks and online tools

The VEC publishes both State election and local government election candidate and scrutineer handbooks with information about the election timeline, legal requirements and key election processes.

These handbooks, along with all relevant forms, are available in candidate information kits via election offices. Scrutineer handbooks are also available for scrutineers at all counting locations. The handbooks and all necessary forms are also published on the VEC website.

Candidates are supported in the creation of their nomination paperwork via the VEC's Candidate Helper which enables candidates to fast-track their nomination appointments.

The VEC remains committed to expanding stakeholder communication and online tools for candidate and RPP audiences to further enhance efficiency and engagement in electoral processes.

Electoral bodies

The VEC works with various national and international electoral bodies with the aim of supporting increased innovation and electoral harmonisation. The exchange of ideas, collaborative research and discussion on key matters of interest with other electoral bodies (including through established forums) is an important basis for continued innovation. These interactions also support the VEC's capacity to recommend and advise on relevant legislative change in Victoria.

Table 27: Support provided to other electoral commissions, 2022-23

ELECTION DATE	JURISDICTION	ELECTION	TOTAL VOTES ISSUED	NOTES
2 July 2022	South Australia	South Australian State District By-election - Bragg - 2022	9	
10 September 2022	Tasmania	Tasmanian Legislative Council By-Election Pembroke - 2022	13	
17 September 2022	Western Australia	State By-election for the district for North West Central - 2022	1	
25 March 2023	New South Wales	NSW State election 2023	1,703	1 postal vote handed in
6 May 2023	Tasmania	Tasmanian Legislative Council Elections for Launceston, Murchison and Rumney 2023	30	Launceston - 17 Murchison - 6 Rumney - 7
Total			1,756	

Electoral bodies cont.

Arrangements with other electoral agencies

The sharing of equipment, staff and knowledge has been a hallmark of engagement with other electoral agencies and 2022–23 provided many opportunities for this. There were 5 requests for the VEC to support other electoral commissions with electoral events during 2022–23, as seen in the above table. Assistance was also provided to the AEC for the Federal election in May 2022, with VEC staff managing Secure Telephone Voting centres in Melbourne and Ballarat along with critical field and head office roles relevant to logistics and procurement.

Numerous staff from many electoral commissions provided greatly valued support to the VEC during the 2022 State election.

Electoral Boundaries Commission

As required by legislation, the VEC provides administrative and technical services to the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC), an independent statutory agency which comprises the Chief Judge of the County Court, the Surveyor-General and the Electoral Commissioner.

There were no scheduled meetings of the EBC in 2022–23. The *Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission 2022–23* is included in this report (See Appendix I on page 167).

Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand

The Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) is a consultative council of the Electoral Commissioners from electoral authorities of the Commonwealth, States and Territories of Australia and New Zealand. Formed in 2012, ECANZ has evolved to become a forum where electoral commissions discuss all aspects of electoral administration, encourage mutual cooperation, and consider contemporary electoral challenges aimed at improving access and equality for all eligible electors. The ECANZ charter is available on www.ecanz.gov.au.

ECANZ met on 4 occasions in 2022–23, and considered a range of issues of common interest, including electoral integrity and security, foreign interference and preparedness, indigenous electoral participation, and the national status of enrolment.

On 28 October 2022, ECANZ agreed to transition the Interjurisdictional Working Group on Electoral Integrity and Security to the Inter-jurisdictional Forum on Electoral Integrity (IFEI). This transition is timely given the unprecedented challenges in protecting and securing the various jurisdictions' political institutions and electoral systems. IFEI will be an important forum to promote best practice and information sharing between relevant Australian Government and state and territory government agencies who have responsibilities for electoral policy, election management, and cyber and information security.

A key achievement for ECANZ was the publication in December 2022 of a joint statement of intent with online platforms. This statement supports Australian electoral management bodies and online platforms to address breaches of Commonwealth, State and Territory electoral-related laws and breaches of online platforms' terms of service related to electoral integrity.

As a sub-group of ECANZ, the Deputy Electoral Commissioners group continued to meet to share information and strategies around election operations, election evaluation and security.

The newly established National Elections Operations Community of Practice, chaired by the VEC's Director, Elections consolidated the elections staffing, resourcing and training groups and provided a renewed direction and support network for senior electoral practitioners who are equally operationally responsible for the planning and delivery of electoral events.

Electoral Matters Committee

The VEC regularly contributes to inquiries by the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC), a joint committee of the Parliament of Victoria. Its powers and responsibilities are determined by the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*.

The EMC commenced an inquiry into the 2022 State election in March 2023. The VEC was invited to appear before the EMC at a public hearing on 27 March 2023 to discuss preliminary matters from the election – timed to permit the outgoing Electoral Commissioner to attend the hearing. The VEC lodged its formal submission to the EMC’s inquiry on Friday 16 June 2023 and requested to speak to its submission at the scheduled public hearings to occur in August 2023.

Electoral Representation Advisory Panels

The Minister for Local Government forms electoral representation advisory panels to review the electoral structures of local councils and recommend structures that comply with the *Local Government Act 2020*. On 11 October 2022, the Minister for Local Government announced the formation of 2 ERAPs to conduct electoral structure reviews of 39 local councils whose current structures do not comply. The reviews commenced in January 2023 and the panels must provide their advice to the Minister by 1 March 2024. As required by the LGA 2020, the VEC provides administrative and technical support to these ERAPs.



SHANE FEWINGS

Title: Technical Specialist
Branch: Information Technology

“The working relationships I have built with suppliers and VEC staff are the key to a successful election.”

SPOTLIGHT ON...

How does your role promote the vision of the VEC?

My primary role at the VEC for the past 22 years has been enabling and supporting the frontline election official to assist the candidates and public in their participation during Local Government & State Elections. I'm part of the IT team. It is a team that must walk a tight line between utilising the latest IT innovations and provisioning secure and reliable services for the elections. The VEC wants to give every Victorian the opportunity to vote but also provide a timely and accurate result. IT has a difficult task to deliver big elections. We only ever bring up this environment every 2 years and the timelines we all work to during an election are firm.

I'm also one of the CPSU delegates (Union). I'm keen to ensure the VEC is a great place to work. In my role as a delegate, I can do my bit to help the staff and VEC achieve such a workplace.

What makes the VEC an innovative and engaging place to work?

The people are what makes the VEC an innovative and engaging place to work. The people all have a common goal, to provide the best possible electoral experience for all Victorians. It has been amazing to see the dedication of the VEC staff to deliver a successful election and protect the VEC's integrity and reputation through their efforts.

What was a key lesson you learned from working on the State election?

My key learning is to “Dot the I's & Cross The T's”. If we don't, something will fall through the cracks. A small problem could replicate across the election network and cause significant issues without the time to resolve it. State Elections have become significantly larger and more complex. The amount of technology that the VEC deploys continues to grow at every election. The working relationships I have built with suppliers and VEC staff are the key to a successful election. We must promote a supportive culture so that we all work together to get the election over the line. We look back and learn what we could have done better and implement it in future elections.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Outside of work I like to be involved in my two sons football teams. I've pretty much done every job available in support of a junior footy team. It is great to mentor the kids and keep them engaged in sport and off the gaming consoles. They gain more life lessons than they realize by being part of a team.

I also like to maintain my title as “Australia's Worst Fisherman”.

Our people

ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-23



Supported the attraction and retention of 191 employees through a period of attrition and growth.



Successful deployment of the annual People Matter Survey and Pulse surveys, continuing to focus the VEC on its people and their engagement.



Continued to provide bespoke and targeted learning outcomes with a focus on developing people leaders and delivering leadership training across all levels of VEC leadership.



Continued to refine and enhance the employee onboarding experience and aligned content to support ongoing compliance training needs.



Supported staff and people leaders in the growth of the hybrid flexible working model across the VEC with a firm alignment between operational and individual needs.



Continued to grow the business partnering model across the VEC, firmly placing Human Resources as a trusted partner in operational planning and delivery.

OUTLOOK 2023-24



Supporting the implementation of Strategy 2027 and associated activities, using the strategy as the road map for Human Resources service delivery.



Leading the implementation of the VEC's organisation design review, to set us up for success in delivering Strategy 2027.



Developing a Wellbeing strategic framework and taking action to improve our people's psychological safety at work.



Support growth of an inclusive and responsive workplace through forming a gender Equality Committee to support deliverables under the gender equality action plan 2021-25.



Support preparations for 2024 Local Government government elections through workforce planning, capability development and growth, and continuous improvement initiatives.



Embedding a continuous improvement approach within Human Resources and ensuring our policies and procedures are efficient and accessible.



Continue to improve staff learning and development outcomes and developing our people.

VEC people are engaged, capable and equipped to support democracy in Victoria.

As an employer of choice, the VEC aims to create an environment that inspires its people to reach their full potential. Its skilled workforce will be equipped for the challenges ahead and for an environment where change is the norm. The VEC does this to support services that are adaptive to the needs of electors and responsive to legislative change.

Promoting and supporting flexible working models

Flexible working is becoming increasingly important for organisations across Australia as they begin to recognise it as a key enabler of gender equality, inclusion and collaboration, and a positive employee experience. We continue to support staff to ‘work anywhere’, with a focus on office-first to support team culture building and collaboration.

Balancing the needs of key service delivery challenges and maintaining operational excellence are important considerations in this hybrid approach. We support staff to make the most of our current office-first flexible working approach, as we move towards even higher locational flexibility in the next financial year.

Increased mobility is also supported within the VEC and across the wider (VPS).VPS. Secure and flexible employment is essential, with initiatives and activities to promote and support internal secondments, as well as identifying and removing barriers to mobility and flexibility.

Best practice hiring and onboarding staff

In an increasingly competitive job market where a positive employee experience is crucial, we strive to ensure the hiring and onboarding of staff in a hybrid model is timely, effective and engaging. We have focused on leveraging technology and improving recruitment processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose and provide a positive user experience.

Great importance is placed on ensuring new staff are supported and engaged early in their employment as people leaders and new staff become more experienced and comfortable with hybrid working.

People leaders are supported with the required tools to do their role, as well as ever-evolving onboarding and induction materials to ensure all staff feel connected and engaged.

Workforce profile

The VEC continues to grow, increasing from 168 ongoing roles in 2021-22 to 191 ongoing roles in 2022-23 to support operational delivery. Growth in 2022-23 is a result of additional staff engaged for the 2022 State election and Electoral Structure and Boundary Reviews.

In 2022-23, staff turnover increased on last year at 19.71%, up from 19.05% in 2021-22. As for last year, turnover was driven by long-serving staff retiring post-delivery of the 2022 State election, and movements within the broader PS and private sector.

Gender diversity composition shifted slightly in comparison to previous years with 49.4% male, 49.8% female and just over 1% self-described. Representation across all age groups is relatively balanced with a slight skew to the 25-34 and 35-44 age brackets. There is a fairly normal distribution across the VPS grades.

Learning and development

Performance management

In terms of performance and development, we continue to develop and evaluate the progress of the ADVANCE program, which is the VEC's performance and development initiative. Our focus during the latter half of the fiscal year was on providing effective performance management training to people leaders with targeted training for all people leaders commencing in April 2023 and continuing into November 2023.

Leadership development

Leadership development was another significant focus with delivery of the LEAP (Leadership Excellence Accelerates Performance) program resuming in the second half of the fiscal year. This included delivery of 3 refreshed learning pathways for leaders at all levels of the organisation. Additionally, a new learning pathway called 'Leading for Performance Impact' was developed specifically to support people leaders. Workshops and skill practice sessions commenced across the 4 leadership pathways from April 2023 and will continue into November 2023.

Other learning programs and capability uplift

To enhance training delivery in a hybrid work environment, we launched a 3-month pilot of a virtual classroom subscription. This subscription allows users to access convenient 90-minute instructor-led training sessions from anywhere. Evaluation feedback from the pilot demonstrated the success of the initiative and represents continued investment by the VEC in a range of just-in-time learning options to support employees working flexibly.

Electoral training

In the first half of the financial year, we were focused on the support, maintenance and delivery of digital training for the State election. We successfully assigned 153,603 online training modules to 20,664 temporary election staff. The training had an average completion rate of 88%, comprising approximately 61,992 hours of online training.

Compliance training was also developed and delivered to the entire election workforce through the platform. Compliance training completion rates were high, with the Voting Management cohort achieving the highest completion rate of around 93%. Field staff demonstrated higher completion rates (around 86%) compared to head office staff. We exceeded industry benchmarks with completion rates averaging just below 90% for field staff and approximately 75% for head office staff. Lessons learned from the compliance training experience will contribute to future improvements in election training delivery.

Inspired people cont.

Code of conduct – VEC values

Ensuring staff are aware of, and comply with, established and expected behaviours and values is key to strong and aligned performance and delivery. All employees are provided with a copy of the VPS Code of Conduct upon engagement. Compliance-based training supports understanding. The VPS values, as outlined in the code of conduct, also continue to be a feature in the employee performance and development (PD) program.

Inappropriate behaviours are called out when witnessed or identified, and appropriate action is taken. Throughout 2022–23, raising awareness of reporting processes and actively supporting staff to be champions of their own and others’ professional wellbeing and psychosocial safety has been a strong focus.

Table 28: Recruitment, departures and turnover 2018–19 to 2022–23

	HEADCOUNT (ONGOING)	FTE (ONGOING, FIXED TERM AND CASUAL)	COMMENCEMENTS	DEPARTURES (FTE)*	STAFF TURNOVER (%)
2018–19	119	137.01	25.60	17	12.41%
2019–20	143	179.01	45.20	16.60	9.27%
2020–21	149	171.51	29.60	25.70	14.98%
2021–22	168	160.87	53.62	30.64	19.05%
2022–23	191	233.37	43.40	46	19.71%

*The Departures FTE includes resignations, fixed-term contract ends and dismissals

Figure 20: Recruitment of staff (FTE ongoing) 2018–19 to 2022–23

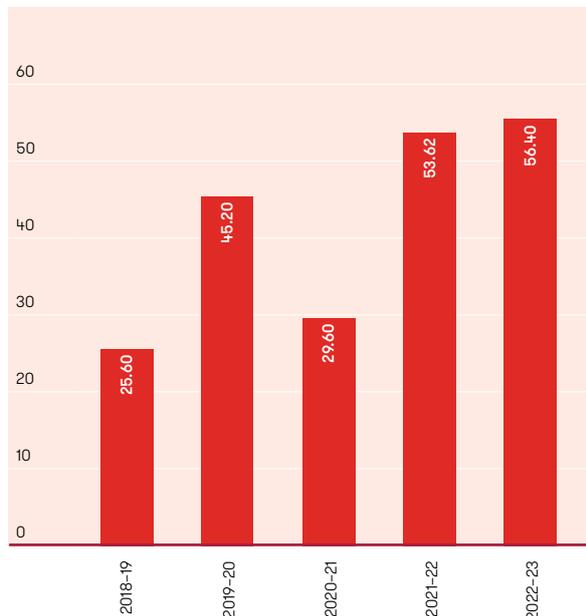


Figure 21: VEC FTE staff by gender, 2018–19 to 2022–23



Staff demographics

Comparative workforce data

Table 29: VEC active staff demographics, last pay period June 2022 to 2023

	2021-22					2022-23				
	ONGOING		FIXED TERM & CASUAL		TOTAL	ONGOING		FIXED TERM & CASUAL		TOTAL
	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	FTE	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	FTE
Gender										
Male	80	76.61	30	28.73	105.33	93	91.86	24	23.6	115.46
Female	88	84.27	34	32.56	116.83	97	91.71	26	24.6	116.31
Self-described	0	0	1	0.96	0.96	1	1	1	0.6	1.6
Total	168	160.87	65	62.24	223.12	191	184.57	51	48.8	233.37
Age										
Under 25	1	0.96	3	2.87	3.83	6	6	2	2	8
25-34	34	32.56	25	23.94	56.5	44	43.9	18	16.6	60.5
35-44	65	62.24	16	15.32	77.56	66	63.56	9	8.8	72.36
45-54	37	35.43	12	11.49	46.92	36	33.91	11	11	44.91
55-64	24	22.98	7	6.7	29.68	32	31.4	8	7.8	39.2
Over 64	7	6.7	2	1.92	8.62	7	5.8	3	2.6	8.4
Total	168	160.87	65	62.24	223.12	191	184.57	51	48.8	233.37
Classification										
Executive Officer*	0	0	2	1.92	1.92	0	0	2	2	2
Senior Executive Service*	2	1.92	3	2.87	4.79	1	1	3	3	4
STS	5	4.79	0	0	4.79	6	6	0	0	6
VPS Grade 1	0	0	2	1.92	1.92	0	0	0	0	0
VPS Grade 2	19		6	5.75	23.94	19	16.77	7	6.6	23.37
VPS Grade 3	29		21	20.11	47.88	35	34.4	11	10.4	44.8
VPS Grade 4	45		16	15.32	57.41	56	53.3	19	18.2	71.5
VPS Grade 5	50		8	7.66	55.54	50	49.1	6	5.8	54.9
VPS Grade 6	18		7	6.7	23.94	24	24	3	2.8	26.8
Total	168	160.87	65	62.24	223.12	191	184.57	51	48.8	233.37

Excluded are external contractors and temporary staff employed by employment agencies, election appointees to statutory offices as defined in the *Public Administration Act 2004*, and election casual staff employed under the Electoral Act.

Staff demographics cont.

Table 30: Full time equivalent (FTE) staffing trends as at 30 June 2019 to 2023

	ONGOING EMPLOYEES				FIXED TERM		CASUAL		TOTALS	
	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FULL TIME (HEAD COUNT)	PART-TIME (HEAD COUNT)	FTE	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FTE	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FTE	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FTE
2019	119	122	23	113.6	24	23.3	1	0.1	145	137
2020	143	124	19	136.61	46	42.4	1	0.1	189	179.01
2021	149	130	19	142.41	27	28.9	2	0.2	178	171.51
2022	168	150	18	160.87	62	59.37	3	2.87	233	223.12
2023	191	173	18	184.57	51	48.8	0	0	242	233.37

Building a safe and inclusive workplace through 2022–23

A safe and positive workplace, without risk to employees' physical or mental wellbeing, is a fundamental requirement for the VEC. The ongoing health, safety and wellbeing of staff is crucial and is supported through continuous improvement practices that identify and address risks to staff.

Inherent in staff reaching their full potential is staff feeling safe in their roles and having the ability to access the information, tools and support to make the right decisions, aligned with legislation, regulations and policies. Furthermore, risk identification and minimisation, incident reporting investigation and regular workplace audits remain a priority for the VEC.

Consequently, in the latter part of the fiscal year, following engagement with executive and senior leaders and the identification of several opportunities for improvement, the VEC embarked on a comprehensive review of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

Work to date has included the identification of key risks and deliverables for the project and the acquisition of project resourcing to undertake the review. More recently, the terms of reference for the Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHS Committee) were revised and refreshed. This work marks a deliberate intent by the organisation to maintain a safe work environment for all our employees and will continue into the new fiscal year.

Hazards, incidents and injuries

During 2022–23, the VEC received a total of 193 incident notifications (see Figure 24: Hazards, incidents and injuries reported, 2018-19 to 2022-23). This level of OHS incidents is not unusual in the context of the delivery of a State election.

The increase in reported incidents in 2022–23, as with most election years, was driven by the significant increase in workforce numbers that come with the approximately 20,000 casual workers who work with the VEC during an election. There were 11 claims for worker compensation and 609 days lost as a result of workplace-related injuries. Two of these incidents were more serious and represent the bulk of this time lost. They involved more serious injuries and ongoing payments and will result in additional days lost in the next financial year. Overall, the rate of incidents per 100 FTE staff is down 32% compared to the previous State election in 2018 despite the number of casual staff increasing.

The VEC is committing additional resources to OHS, recruiting an expert to carry out a root and branch review and update of our OHS policies and management system. This overhaul will be in place for our next major electoral event and will ensure new procedures and safeguards are in place to mitigate risk to election staff.

Living with COVID-19

The VEC has adopted a risk-based approach to manage the reduced threat that COVID-19 currently poses. The VEC has ensured it remains agile and adaptive, so it can respond swiftly and decisively to changes in the risk level without compromise to our deliverables.

Throughout 2022–23 the reduced risk resulted in several major changes from the disbanding of the COVID-19 Working Group and amendments to the VEC *COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements Policy*. The policy amendment included downgrading the vaccination requirement from 'mandatory vaccination' to 'vaccination highly recommended'. These changes were adopted following a comprehensive consultation process with all staff and a risk assessment.

Occupational health and safety cont.

Mental health and wellbeing

Historically, the VEC has taken steps towards promoting employee wellbeing by implementing activities such as the formation of a workforce resilience group, promoting key mental health awareness and wellbeing days, and monitoring staff wellbeing indicators. We have noted sporadic engagement with our existing wellbeing initiatives, and the need for a more comprehensive approach to mental health and wellbeing has become increasingly evident.

In the latter part of the fiscal year, we took a strategic decision to build a comprehensive and holistic wellbeing strategic framework and action plan. This pivotal moment marks the beginning of a transformative journey for the VEC aimed at cultivating a healthier and more fulfilling work environment for all our employees.

Work to date has included identifying an evidence-based model that will allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of our wellbeing activities conducted thus far and identify and plan future activities. We have begun to analyse the data and incorporate relevant statistics, assessing the utilisation and impact of our existing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other initiatives. These insights will provide valuable guidance on areas of improvement and inform the development of our comprehensive wellbeing strategy.

Further stakeholder engagement with key individuals and groups will be critical. This work will continue into the early part of the new fiscal year. By involving employees, leaders and other key stakeholders from the outset, the team can gain comprehensive insights into their wellbeing challenges and expectations.

Figure 22: Claims for WorkCover 2018-19 to 2022-23

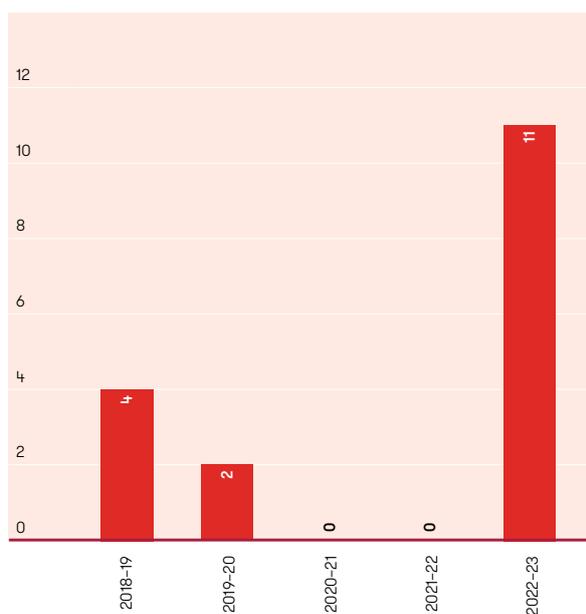


Figure 23: Days lost as a result of workplace related injury, 2018-19 to 2022-23

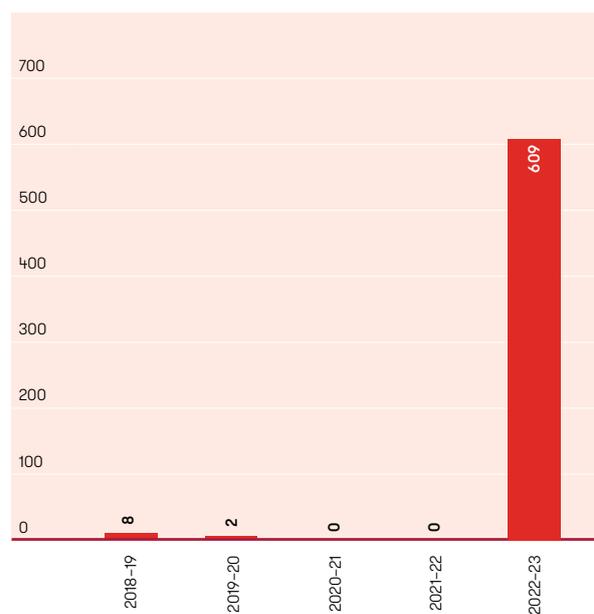


Figure 24: Hazards, incidents and injuries reported, 2018-19 to 2022-23

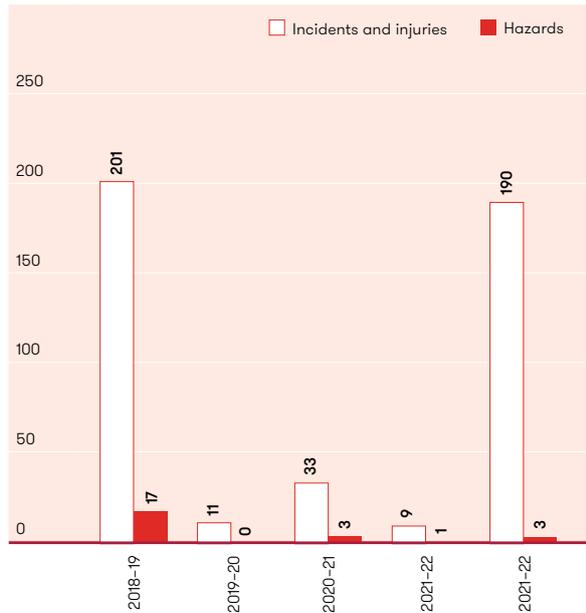


Figure 25: Reported incidents, hazards and near misses - by affected person, 2022-23

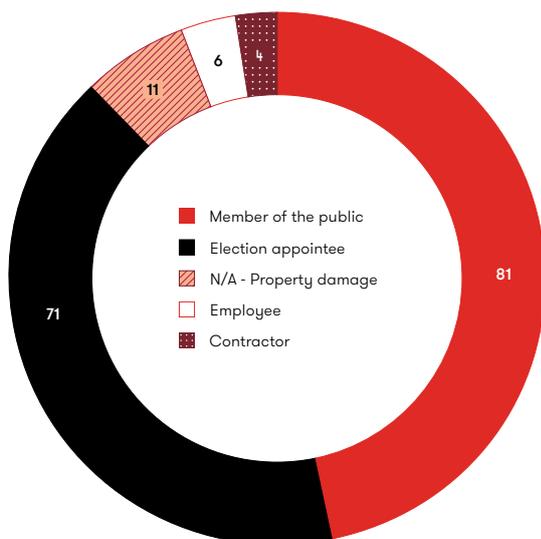
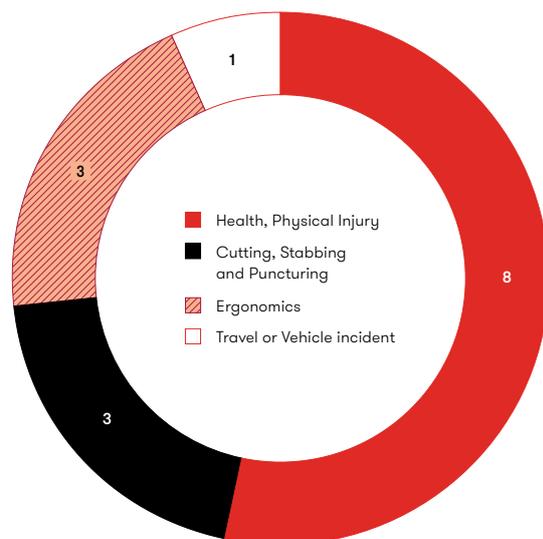


Figure 26: Reported incidents, hazards and near misses - by type, 2022-23



Occupational health and safety cont.

Table 31: The VEC's performance against OHS management measurements 2018-19 to 2022-23

MEASURE	KPI	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Incidents	Staff FTE (VPS only)	137	179.01	171.51	223.12	233.37
	Number of incidents	163	11	83	10	190
	Rate per 100 FTE	118.98	6.14	48.39	4.48	81.42
Claims	Number of standard claims	1	2	-	0	5
	Rate per 100 FTE	0.73	1.12	-	0	2.14
	Number of lost time claims	1	1	-	0	3
	Rate per 100 FTE	0.730	0.56	-	0	1.29
	Number of claims exceeding 13 weeks	-	-	-	0	4
	Rate per 100 FTE	-	-	-	0	1.71
Fatalities	Fatality claims	-	-	-	-	-
Claim costs	Average cost per standard claim	479	706.18	-	0	\$1,054.40
Return to work (RTW)	Percentage of claims with RTW plan <30 days	-	-	-	0	50%
Management	Evidence of OHS policy statement, OHS commitment objectives, regular reporting to senior management of OHS, and OHS plans (signed by CEO or equivalent)	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed - currently being reviewed
	Evidence of OHS criteria in purchasing guidelines (including goods, services and personnel)	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed - currently being reviewed
Consultation	Evidence of agreed structure of designated workgroups (DWGs), health and safety participation representatives (HSRs) and issue resolution procedures (IRPs)	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed - currently being reviewed
	Compliance with agreed structure on DWGs, HSRs and IRPs	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed - currently being reviewed

MEASURE	KPI	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Risk management	Percentage of internal audits/inspections conducted as planned	88%	50%	25%	80%	0%
	Percentage of issues identified and actioned arising from:					
	▶ internal audits	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	▶ HSR provisional improvement notices (PINs)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Nil	N/A
	▶ WorkSafe notices	N/A	N/A	N/A	Nil	N/A
Training	Percentage of managers and staff that have received OHS training:					
	▶ induction	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	▶ management training	0%	0%	0%	75%	100%
	▶ contractors, temps and visitors	9% ¹	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Percentage of HSRs trained:					
	▶ acceptance of role	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	▶ refresher training	100%	100%	100%	100%	16.70%
	▶ reporting of incidents and injuries	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
EAP Usage	Total client cases	-	-	-	-	10
	Hours by service	-	-	-	-	21
	Appointments by case	-	-	-	-	2.1

¹ Figure does not include casual election staff



MYA STEWART

Title: Business Support Officer
Branch: Electoral Enrolment Branch

“Roles like the business support officer help the VEC be greater than the sum of its parts.”

SPOTLIGHT ON...

How does your role promote the vision of the VEC?

As a business support officer, I manage a wide range of enabling activities – from collecting and sharing FAQs for our branch to maintaining our professional image by having standardised email signatures that are appropriate for the business. I get to manage some of the bigger events too – including the hosting logistics of all staff meetings, helping new staff through the onboarding process, catering and minute taking for executive management group meetings, and one of my favourites – pooling donations to go towards gifts for departing staff to go along with their farewell cards. All these activities build our culture and make the VEC function better for every outward facing activity, roles like the business support officer help the VEC be greater than the sum of its parts.

What makes the VEC an innovative and engaging place to work?

The most memorable instance of the engaging work I've done at the VEC was when I went out to deliver a democracy awareness event with our Cultural and Linguistical Diversity officer at the Fitzroy housing estates health and wellbeing expo. It was a big outreach opportunity for the VEC to reach a part of the Vietnamese community in Victoria and especially people who had limited English language knowledge or were new to Victoria. The event focused on educating the community in language about their eligibility to enrol and vote as well as generally discussing how democracy works in Victoria. It was a hugely rewarding event to reach out to the community and was even more special to me because of my Vietnamese heritage.

What was a key lesson you learned from working on the State election?

During the 2022 State election I was seconded to our Public Enquiry Service (PES). It was the first point of contact for a wide variety of stakeholders with questions about enrolment, voting centre locations, and funding and disclosure requirements. Being able to spend time talking to voters about what they were hoping the VEC could do for them, and why, was an eye-opening experience. It taught me that the community's expectations are moving quickly with the wider context of the world, and concerns about data security were a big example of this. I dealt with a significant number of enquiries about becoming a silent elector because of recent public data breaches. It drove home the point that the VEC needs to be responsive to what the community expects and keep pace, or get ahead of, the rest of the world.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I love Japanese calligraphy which I studied for 4 years so I take any chance I can get to practice it. There is so much technique and art that goes into calligraphy – a particular stroke order, a particular brush and particular ink. The other great thing is that the community in Melbourne and online is so friendly and tight knit due to it being a slightly more niche activity. It's also important to me to balance my work activity – which is usually all about organisation and intellectual work – with something more focused on creativity and expression.

Financial statements

ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-23



Continued compliance with the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance – no reportable deficiencies for reporting period.



Fiscal resource management to enable delivery of State election 2022 program.



Delivery of VEC financial sustainability strategy.



Delivery of the VEC's major programs and initiatives within the available funding envelope in support of State election 2022 delivery.

OUTLOOK 2023-24



Planning and readiness for Local Government election 2024.



Maturity of VEC program slate for Local Government 2024 and State election 2026.



Implementation of new enterprise finance system.

The objective of the financial report is to provide stakeholders with an understanding of the VEC’s financial performance and position over the 2022–23 reporting period.

Assets – what the VEC owns

Non-financial assets make up the majority of the VEC’s assets. Assets include debtor receivables, election inventory stored at the Tullamarine warehouse, plant and equipment spread across 2 locations, and intangible assets, which cover all VEC systems and programs. Prior to the November 2022 election, significant resources were invested to ensure election-related systems and platforms were updated and ready for deployment, including advanced cyber security features for data management and integrity purposes. The VEC’s Election Management System (EMS2) build was finalised and deployed successfully. Continued investments were made in portable devices such as laptops and tablets to enhance election service delivery across all election sites.

Liabilities – what the VEC owes

The VEC’s liabilities are largely represented by employee provisions (annual leave and long service leave owing to staff) and supplier commitments. Money owed to suppliers and creditors was timing-related at 30 June 2023, based on terms of trade between the VEC and respective suppliers. Utilising strong internal cash flow management, the VEC endeavours to keep outstanding supplier commitments to a minimum ensuring payments are made within agreed trade terms. Trade creditor balances owing at 30 June 2023 were subsequently cleared the following month. The impact of COVID-19 meant staff were unable to book holidays and take leave over the past several years causing staff entitlement provisions to increase considerably in comparison with previous reporting periods. The liability is being monitored and managed by VEC management.

Figure 27: VEC assets (\$'000)

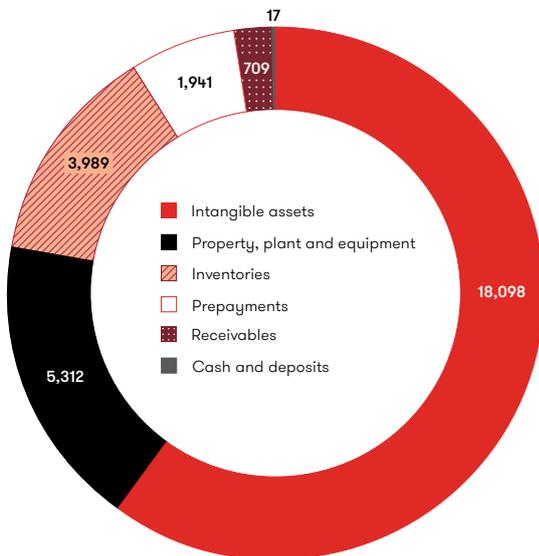
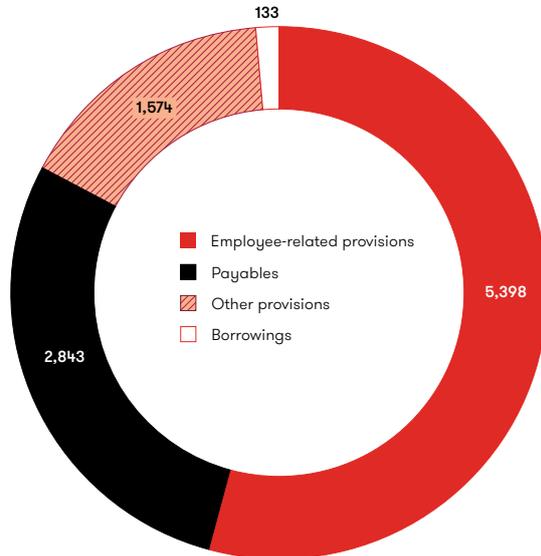


Figure 28: VEC liabilities (\$'000)



Equity - what the VEC is worth

Equity is measured as the net of assets less liabilities. The VEC's total equity position at 30 June 2023 is \$20.12 million, comprising contributed capital and carrying accumulated deficit.

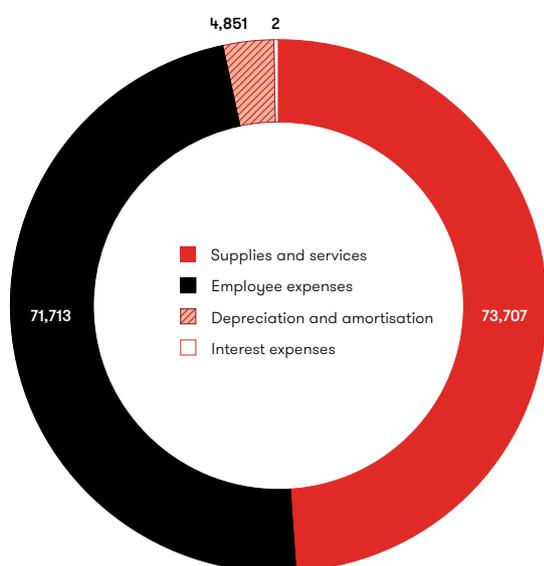
Funding fluctuations

The VEC's only source of funding is special appropriation from the State Government. The Commission's funding fluctuates year-on-year depending on the electoral activity being delivered (see Figure 30). Every 2 years, the VEC conducts either a state election or local government elections, which significantly increase the VEC's funding for the particular year. With 2022-23 being a state election year, the VEC's funding increased to \$140.60 million (2020-21: \$50.12 million). Special appropriation funding does not include non-cash expenses, such as depreciation, staff entitlement provisions and year-end accruals.

Expenses - how the VEC's funding is utilised

In addition to the VEC standard operating costs, the additional appropriation funding received was committed towards running the 2022 State election. The major cost categories where resources were committed over the period included:

Figure 29: VEC operational expenditure (\$'000)



- ▶ wages and overheads – upscaling election workforce and election officials
- ▶ election advertising and awareness campaigns
- ▶ ballot paper printing and distribution
- ▶ election logistics
- ▶ mail and postage services
- ▶ property rental (Melbourne Showgrounds, counting centre, election offices and early voting locations across the state)
- ▶ election infrastructure including IT and security.

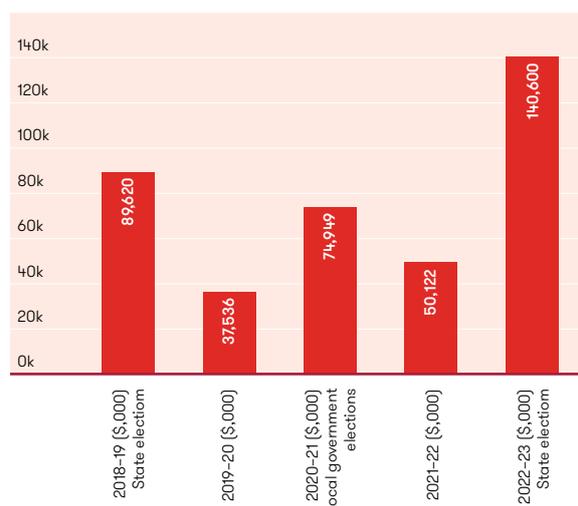
To ensure successful delivery of the election, the VEC also incurred additional unplanned costs relating to Victorian floods and the continuing impact of COVID-19. Such services included the expanded services of telephone assisted voting and Melton drive-through voting.

Administrative services

The VEC also manages election-related administrative services on behalf of the State and local governments. Funding collected and dispersed during 2022-23 was \$21.80 million. This is not shown in the VEC financial results or in the financial statements, but is declared in Note 4.1: Administered (non-controlled) items. This included:

- ▶ collection and distribution of fines
- ▶ payment of 2022 State election public funding, including advance payments for State election 2026
- ▶ administrative expenditure funding (Funding and Disclosure legislation)
- ▶ policy funding related claims

Figure 30: Special appropriation 2018-19 to 2022-23 (\$'000)



Declaration in the financial statements

The attached financial statements for the Victorian Electoral Commission have been prepared in accordance with Directions 5.2 of the Standing Directions of the Assistant Treasurer under the *Financial Management Act 1994*, applicable Financial Reporting Directions, Australian Accounting Standards, including Interpretations, and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

We further state that, in our opinion, the information set out in the comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, cash flow statement and accompanying notes, presents fairly the financial transactions during the year ended 30 June 2023 and financial position of the Commission is correct as at 30 June 2023.

At the time of signing, we are not aware of any circumstance which would render any particulars included in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We authorise the attached financial statements for issue on 17 August 2023.



Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner
Victorian Electoral Commission
Melbourne 17 August 2023



Binh Le
Chief Financial Officer
Victorian Electoral Commission
Melbourne 17 August 2023

Comprehensive operating statement

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Continuing operations			
Income from transactions			
Special appropriations	2.1	140,600	50,122
Total income from transactions		140,600	50,122
Expenses from transactions			
Employee expenses	3.1.1	(71,713)	(27,550)
Depreciation and amortisation	5.1.1	(4,851)	(3,226)
Interest expense		(2)	(3)
Other operating expenses	3.2	(73,707)	(19,957)
Total expenses from transactions		(150,273)	(50,736)
Net result from transactions (net operating balance)		(9,673)	(614)
Other economic flows included in net result			
Net gain/(loss) on non-financial assets	9.2	13	61
Other gains/(losses) from other economic flows	9.2	55	311
Total other economic flows included in net result		68	372
Comprehensive result		(9,605)	(242)

The comprehensive operating statement should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Balance sheet

as at 30 June 2023

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Assets			
Financial assets			
Cash and deposits	7.1	17	5
Receivables	6.1	709	1,564
Total financial assets		726	1,569
Non-financial assets			
Inventories	6.3	3,989	5,792
Property, plant and equipment	5.1	5,312	4,713
Intangible assets	5.2	18,098	16,852
Prepayments	6.4	1,941	2,009
Total non-financial assets		29,340	29,366
Total assets		30,066	30,935
Liabilities			
Payables	6.2	2,843	1,481
Borrowings		133	83
Employee-related provisions	3.1.2	5,398	4,897
Other provisions	6.5	1,574	1,458
Total liabilities		9,948	7,919
Net assets		20,118	23,016
Equity			
Accumulated (deficit) / surplus		(46,461)	(36,856)
Contributed capital		66,579	59,872
Net worth		20,118	23,016

The balance sheet should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Statement of changes in equity

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

	NOTES	ACCUMULATED DEFECIT \$'000	CONTRIBUTED CAPITAL \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
Balance at 1 July 2021		(36,614)	54,162	17,548
Net result for the year		(242)	-	(242)
Capital appropriations	9.9	-	5,710	5,710
Balance at 30 June 2022		(36,856)	59,872	23,016
Net result for the year		(9,605)	-	(9,605)
Capital appropriations	9.9	-	6,707	6,707
Balance at 30 June 2023		(46,461)	66,579	20,118

The statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Cash flow statement

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts			
Receipts from Government		141,477	50,122
Net Goods and Services Tax recovered from the ATO	(i)	1,311	2,105
Total receipts		142,788	52,227
Payments			
Payments to suppliers and employees		(142,951)	(52,430)
Interest and other costs of finance paid		(2)	(3)
Total payments		(142,953)	(52,433)
Net cash flows from / (used in) operating activities	7.1.1	(165)	(206)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchases of non-financial assets		(6,580)	(5,483)
Net cash flows (used in) / from investing activities		(6,580)	(5,483)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Owner contributions by State Government		6,707	5,710
Repayment of principal portion of lease liabilities	(ii)	(32)	(19)
Proceeds from borrowings		82	-
Net cash flows from / (used in) financing activities		6,757	5,691
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		12	2
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		5	3
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	7.1	17	5

The above cash flow statement should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Notes:

(i) Goods and Services Tax recovered from the ATO is presented on a net basis

(ii) The VEC has recognised cash payments for the principal portion of lease payments as financing activities; cash payments for the interest portion as operating activities consistent with the presentation of interest payments and short-term lease payments for leases and low-value assets as operating activities.

Notes to the financial statements

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Note 1. About this report

The Victorian Electoral Commission (the VEC) is an independent body of the State of Victoria, established pursuant to an order made by the Premier under the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Its principal address is:

Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

The VEC is an administrative agency acting on behalf of the Crown.

A description of the nature of the VEC's operations and its principal activities is included in the report of operations which does not form part of these financial statements.

The VEC is funded by accrual-based parliamentary appropriations for the provision of outputs such as state elections. It provides on a fee-for-service basis election services for Local Government. The fees charges for these services are determined by prevailing market forces.

Basis of preparation

These financial statements cover the VEC as an individual reporting entity and include all of its controlled activities.

These financial statements are presented in Australian dollars, and prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the note associated with the item measured on a different basis.

The accrual basis of accounting has been applied in the preparation of these financial statements whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid. The only exception is for special appropriation revenue, which is recognised on a cash basis when the amount appropriated for a specific purpose is received by the VEC.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about financial information being presented. The significant judgements made in the preparation of these financial statements are disclosed in the notes where amounts affected by these judgements are disclosed. Estimates and associated assumptions are based on professional judgements derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of AASs that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates relate to:

- ▶ the recognition and measurement of internally generated intangible assets (refer to 5.2.1)
- ▶ the fair value of measurement of property, plant and equipment (refer to 8.3)
- ▶ employee provisions (refer to 3.1.2)
- ▶ useful lives of property, plant and equipment (refer to 5.1.1).

All amounts in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, unless otherwise stated.

Compliance information

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994* and applicable Australian Accounting Standards (AAS) which include Interpretations, issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB). In particular, they are presented in a manner consistent with the requirements of the AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial reporting*.

Where appropriate, those AAS paragraphs applicable to not-for-profit entities have been applied.

Accounting policies are selected in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Note 2: Funding delivery of our services

Introduction

The VEC's purpose is to deliver high quality, accessible electoral services with innovation, integrity and independence to enable all Victorians to actively participate in the democratic process.

Objectives

The VEC's overall objective is to provide election services to State and Local Government, as well as conducting various fee-for-service elections.

To enable the VEC to fulfil its objectives and outputs, it receives parliamentary appropriations.

2.1 Summary of income that funds the delivery of services

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Special appropriations	2.2	140,600	50,122
Total income from transactions		140,600	50,122

2.2 Appropriations

Special appropriations income becomes controlled and is recognised by the VEC when it is appropriated from the Consolidated Fund by the Victorian Parliament, via the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and applied for the administration of the *Electoral Act 2002* under section 181(2) Appropriation of money.

Note 3: The cost of delivering services

Introduction

This section provides an account of the expenses incurred by the VEC in delivering services and outputs. In Note 2, the funds that enable the provision of services were disclosed and in this note the cost associated with provision of services are recorded.

3.1 Expenses incurred in delivery of services

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Employee expenses	3.1.1	71,713	27,550
Other operating expenses	3.2	73,707	19,957
Total expenses incurred in delivery of services		145,420	47,507

3.1.1 Employee benefits in the comprehensive operating statement

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Defined benefit and contribution superannuation expenses	5,787	2,266
Salaries and wages, annual leave and long service leave	65,926	25,284
Total employee expenses	71,713	27,550

Employee expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, superannuation, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, redundancy payments and WorkCover premiums.

The amount recognised in the comprehensive operating statement in relation to superannuation is employer contributions for members for both defined benefit and defined contribution superannuation plans that are paid or payable during the reporting period.

The VEC does not recognise any defined benefit liability in respect of the plan(s) because the entity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay future benefits relating to its employees. Its only obligation is to pay superannuation contributions as they fall due. The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) discloses the State's defined benefit liabilities in its disclosure for administered items.

3.1.2 Employee benefits in the balance sheet

Provision is made for benefits accruing to employees in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave for services rendered to the reporting date and recorded as an expense during the period the services are delivered.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current provisions		
Annual leave		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	1,711	1,843
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	333	24
Long service leave		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	189	181
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	1,478	1,350
	3,711	3,398
Provisions for on-costs		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	309	318
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	297	217
	606	535
Total current employee-related provisions	4,317	3,933
Non-current provisions		
Employee benefits	930	833
On-costs	151	131
Total non-current employee-related provisions	1,081	964
Total employee-related provisions	5,398	4,897

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Reconciliation of movement in on-cost provision

	2023 \$'000
Opening balance	666
Additional provisions recognised	1,630
Reductions arising from payments / other sacrifices of future economic benefits	(1,539)
Closing balance	757
Current	606
Non-current	151
Total employee benefits	757

Annual leave

Liabilities for annual leave and related on-costs are recognised as part of the employee benefit provision as current liabilities, because the VEC does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of these liabilities. Liabilities expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting period are measured at undiscounted amounts. Liabilities that are not expected to be settled within 12 months are also recognised in the provision for employee benefits as current liabilities, but are measured at present value of the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement.

Employment on-costs such as payroll tax, workers compensation and superannuation are not employee benefits. They are disclosed separately as a component of the provision for employee benefits when the employment to which they relate has occurred.

Long service leave

Unconditional LSL is disclosed as a current liability, even where the VEC does not expect to settle the liability within 12 months because it will not have the unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement should an employee take leave within 12 months.

The components of this current LSL are measured at:

- ▶ undiscounted value – if the VEC expects to wholly settle within 12 months; or
- ▶ present value – if the VEC does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

Conditional LSL is disclosed as a non-current liability. There is an unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement until the employee has completed the requisite years of service. This non-current LSL liability is measured at present value.

Any gain or loss following revaluation of the present value of non-current LSL liability is recognised as a transaction, except to the extent that a gain or loss arises due to changes in bond interest rates for which it is then recognised as other economic flows included in the net result.

Significant judgement: Provisions

The provision for employee benefits requires significant judgement and use of assumptions. In particular, the application of wage inflation, discount rates and periods of service to calculate liabilities for annual leave and long service leave. Expected future payments are discounted using a single weighted average discount rate based on market yields of national government bonds in Australia that reflects the estimated timing and amount of benefit payment.

3.1.3 Superannuation contributions

Employees of the VEC are entitled to receive superannuation benefits and the VEC contributes to both defined benefit and defined contribution plans. The defined benefit plan(s) provides benefits based on years of service and final average salary.

	PAID CONTRIBUTION FOR THE YEAR	
	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Defined benefit plans		
State Superannuation Fund – revised and new (i)	37	36
Defined contribution plans		
Colonial First	985	-
Australian Super	855	-
Hostplus Super	359	-
Rest Super	238	-
Hesta Super	168	-
Uni Super	157	-
First State Super	111	-
Emergency Super	110	-
Vision Super	110	-
Aware Super	1,825	822
Other	832	1,408
Total	5,787	2,266

Note: (i) The basis for determining the level of contributions is determined by the various actuaries of the defined benefit superannuation plans.

There were no outstanding contributions at year end.

3.2 Other operating expenses

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Purchase of supplies and consumables	13,110	671
Purchase of services	40,866	11,684
Maintenance	4,435	2,307
Accommodation expenses	15,296	5,295
Total other operating expenses	73,707	19,957

Other operating expenses generally represent the day-to-day running costs incurred in normal operations and are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred. A significant increase in 2023 is primarily due to service delivery of the 2022 State election.

Factors such as Victorian floods, market workforce constraints, cyber security uplift and management, and rise in third party services were the major contributors.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Note 4: Administered financial information output

4.1 Administered (non-controlled) items

In addition to the specific VEC operations which are included in the financial statements (comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of change in equity and cash flow statement), the VEC administers or manages, but does not control, other activities and resources on behalf of the State.

Administered income includes the provision of services for conducting State and Local Government elections, fines and electoral entitlements.

Administered expenses include payments made in conducting State and Local government elections, payments to Councils and payments for Administrative Expenditure, Policy Development and Advance Public funding. Administered assets include government income earned but not yet collected.

	STATE		LOCAL GOVERNMENT		TOTAL	
	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Administered income from transactions						
Income from Elections	1,168	1,349	-	-	1,168	1,349
Fines	291	573	1,341	3,675	1,632	4,248
Candidate Deposits	236	-	-	-	236	-
Electoral entitlements	18,330	12,551	-	-	18,330	12,551
Receipts for Funding and Disclosure	1,779	303	-	-	1,779	303
Total administered income from transactions	21,804	14,776	1,341	3,675	23,145	18,451
Administered expenses from transactions						
Payments into the Consolidated Fund	1,284	8,572	-	-	1,284	8,572
Fines to remit to Councils	-	-	1,341	3,675	1,341	3,675
Payments for Funding and Disclosure	35,066	6,637	-	-	35,066	6,637
Total administered expenses from transactions	36,350	15,209	1,341	3,675	37,691	18,884
Total administered net result from transactions (net operating balance)	(14,546)	(433)	-	-	(14,546)	(433)
Administered assets						
Cash	-	-	2,235	1,225	2,235	1,225
Receivables	2,215	422	-	-	2,215	422
Advanced Funding	13,579	30,316	-	-	13,579	30,316
Total administered assets	15,794	30,738	2,235	1,225	18,029	31,963
Administered liabilities						
Payables	135	533	-	-	135	533
Compulsory Voting Fines	-	-	2,235	1,225	2,235	1,225
Total administered liabilities	135	533	2,235	1,225	2,370	1,758
Total administered net assets	15,659	30,205	-	-	15,659	30,205

Note 5: Key assets available to support output delivery

Introduction

The VEC controls property, intangibles, plant and equipment that are used in fulfilling its objectives and conducting its activities. They represent the resources that have been entrusted to the VEC to be utilised for delivery of those outputs.

5.1 Total property, plant and equipment

	GROSS CARRYING AMOUNT		ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION		NET CARRYING AMOUNT	
	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Plant, equipment, fixtures & fittings and vehicles at fair value (i)	12,209	9,725	(7,757)	(6,318)	4,452	3,407
Leasehold Improvements	6,684	6,567	(5,824)	(5,261)	860	1,306
Net carrying amount	18,893	16,292	(13,581)	(11,579)	5,312	4,713

Note: (i) Right of use motor vehicles with a net carrying amount of \$133,010 (2022 \$82,628) are included in this balance.

Initial recognition

All non-financial physical assets are measured initially at cost and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment.

The cost of leasehold improvements is capitalised as an asset and amortised over the shorter of the remaining term of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvements.

The initial cost of leased motor vehicles is measured at amounts equal to the fair value of the leased asset or, if lower, the present value of the minimum lease payments determined at the inception of the lease.

Right-of-use asset acquired by lessees – initial measurement

The VEC recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability at the lease commencement date. The right-of-use asset is initially measured at cost, which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability adjusted for:

- ▶ any lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any lease incentive received
- ▶ any initial direct costs incurred
- ▶ an estimate of costs to dismantle and remove the underlying asset or to restore the underlying asset.

The VEC depreciates the right-of-use assets on a straight-line basis from the lease commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset or the end of the lease term. Refer to the table at 5.1.2 for reconciliation of movements in carrying amounts of the VEC's right-of-use assets.

Fair value of plant, equipment, fixtures and fittings that are specialised in use (such that is rarely sold other than as a part of a going concern) is determined using the current replacement cost method.

Refer to Note 8.3 for additional information on fair value determination of plant and equipment.

Impairment of property, plant and equipment

The recoverable amount of primarily non-cash-generating assets of not-for-profit entities, which are typically specialised in nature and held for continuing use of their service capacity, is expected to be materially the same as fair value determined under AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement, with the consequence that AASB 136 does not apply to such assets that are regularly revalued.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

5.1.1 Depreciation and amortisation

CHARGE FOR THE PERIOD	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Property, plant and equipment	2,019	1,261
Intangible assets	2,832	1,965
Total depreciation and amortisation	4,851	3,226

All property, plant and equipment and other non-financial physical assets that have finite useful lives are depreciated. Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis, at rates that allocate the asset's value, less any estimated residual values, over its estimated useful life.

Intangible produced assets with finite lives are amortised as an 'expense from transactions' on a straight-line basis over their useful lives.

The estimated useful lives, residual values and depreciation method are reviewed at the end of each annual reporting period, and adjustments made where appropriate.

The following are typical estimated useful lives for the different asset classes for current and prior years.

ASSET CLASS	2023 (YEARS)	2022 (YEARS)
Leasehold Improvements	10	10 - 12
Leased motor vehicles	3	3
Plant & equipment	5 - 10	5 - 10
Furniture & fittings	10	5 - 14
Computer equipment and software	3 - 5	3 - 7
Intangible produced assets - software development	5 - 14	14 - 16

5.1.2 Reconciliation of movements in carrying amounts of property, plant, equipment and vehicles

	PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT AT FAIR VALUE		LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS		TOTAL	
	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Opening balance	3,406	2,961	1,307	1,585	4,713	4,546
Additions	2,514	1,303	116	196	2,630	1,499
Disposals	(12)	(71)	-	-	(12)	(71)
Depreciation	(1,456)	(787)	(563)	(474)	(2,019)	(1,261)
Closing balance	4,452	3,406	860	1,307	5,312	4,713

5.2 Intangible assets

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Gross carrying amount		
Opening balance	37,425	33,213
Addition from internal development	4,078	4,212
Closing balance	41,503	37,425
Accumulated amortisation		
Opening balance	(20,573)	(18,608)
Amortisation expense (i)	(2,832)	(1,965)
Closing balance	(23,405)	(20,573)
Net book value	18,098	16,852

Note (i) The consumption of intangible produced assets is included in 'depreciation and amortisation' line item on the Comprehensive Operating Statement

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

5.2.1 Reconciliation of movements in carrying amounts of intangibles

	SOFTWARE		WORK IN PROGRESS		TOTAL	
	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Opening balance	16,432	11,191	420	3,414	16,852	14,605
Additions	400	4,212	3,678	-	4,078	4,212
Transfer to software	-	2,994	-	(2,994)	-	-
Amortisation	(2,832)	(1,965)	-	-	(2,832)	(1,965)
Closing balance	14,000	16,432	4,098	420	18,098	16,852

Initial recognition

Purchased intangible assets are initially recognised at cost. When the recognition criteria in AASB 138 *Intangible Assets* are met, internally generated intangible assets are recognised at cost. Subsequently, intangible assets with finite useful lives are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses. Depreciation and amortisation begins when the asset is available for use, that is, when it is in the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

An internally generated intangible asset arising from development (or from the development phase of an internal project) is recognised if, and only if, all of the following are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the intangible asset so that it will be available for use or sale
- an intention to complete the intangible asset and use or sell it
- the ability to use or sell the intangible asset
- the intangible asset will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the intangible asset
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the intangible asset during its development.

Subsequent measurement

Intangible produced assets with finite useful lives are amortised as an 'expense from transactions' on a straight-line basis over their useful lives. Produced intangible assets have useful lives of 5 - 14 years.

Impairment of intangible assets

Intangible assets not yet available for use are not depreciated or amortised, but are tested for impairment:

- annually
- whenever there is an indication that the intangible asset may be impaired.

Intangible assets with finite useful lives are tested for impairment whenever an indication of impairment is identified.

Significant judgement: Recognition and measurement of internally generated intangible assets

Significant judgement required to assess if costs can be capitalised, useful lives are appropriate and if there indicators of impairment.

Significant intangible assets

The VEC has capitalised software development expenditure for the development of its election management and electoral rolls development. The carrying amount of the capitalised software development expenditure of \$18.1 million (2022: \$16.9 million) includes existing developed software and software under development.

Note 6. Other assets and liabilities

This section sets out those assets and liabilities that arose from the VEC's controlled operations.

6.1 Receivables

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current receivables		
Statutory		
GST input tax credit recoverable	-	1,290
Total statutory receivables	-	1,290
Contractual		
Other receivables	709	274
Total contractual receivables	709	274
Total current receivables	709	1,564
Total receivables	709	1,564

Contractual receivables are classified as financial instruments and categorised as 'financial assets measured at amortised costs'. They are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. The VEC holds the contractual receivables with the objective to collect the contractual cash flows, and therefore subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment. They include mainly debtors in relation to goods and services.

Statutory receivables do not arise from contracts and are recognised and measured similarly to contractual receivables (except for impairment), but are not classified as financial instruments for disclosure purposes. The VEC applies AASB 9 for initial measurement of the statutory receivables and as a result statutory receivables are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction cost.

All Receivables are neither past due nor impaired.

6.2 Payables

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current payables		
Contractual		
Supplies and services (i)	1,509	1,375
Other payables	1,334	106
Total current payables	2,843	1,481
Total payables	2,843	1,481

Note: (i) The average credit period is 30 days. No interest is charged on payables.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Contractual payables are classified as financial instruments and measured at amortised cost. Accounts payable represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the VEC prior to the end of the financial year that are unpaid.

Maturity analysis of contractual payables (i)

	CARRYING AMOUNT \$'000	NOMINAL AMOUNT \$'000	MATURITY DATES	
			LESS THAN 1 MONTH \$'000	1-3 MONTHS \$'000
2023 Payables				
Trade and other payables	2,843	2,843	2,843	-
Total	2,843	2,843	2,843	-
2022 Payables				
Trade and other payables	1,481	1,481	1,481	-
Total	1,481	1,481	1,481	-

Note: (i) Maturity analysis is presented using the contractual undiscounted cash flows.

6.3 Inventories

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current inventories		
Supplies and consumables		
At cost	3,989	5,792
Total inventories	3,989	5,792

Inventories include goods and other property for distribution at zero or nominal cost, or for consumption in the ordinary course of business operations. Inventories held for distribution are measured at cost, adjusted for any loss of service potential. Costs for all other inventory is measured on the basis of weighted average cost. Bases used in assessing loss of service potential for inventories held for distribution include current replacement cost and technical or functional obsolescence. Technical obsolescence occurs when an item still functions for some or all of the tasks it was originally acquired to do, but no longer matches existing technologies. Functional obsolescence occurs when an item no longer functions the way it did when it was first acquired.

6.4 Other non-financial assets

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current other non-financial assets		
Prepayments	1,941	2,009
Total current other non-financial assets	1,941	2,009

Other non-financial assets include prepayments which represent payments in advance of receipt of goods or services or that part of expenditure made in one accounting period covering a term extending beyond that period.

6.5 Other provisions

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Non-current provisions		
Make good-provision	1,574	1,458
Total other provisions	1,574	1,458

In accordance with the Centralised Accommodation Management agreement with the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF), VEC is required to provide for the removal of leasehold improvements from the occupied Head office and warehouse facilities and restore the premises to its original condition at the end of the agreement term.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Note 7. How we financed our operations

This section provides information on the sources of finance the VEC used during its operations and other information related to financing the VEC's activities.

This section includes disclosures of balances that are financial instruments (such as cash balances).

7.1 Cash balances and cash flow information

Cash and deposits comprise cash on hand and cash at bank which are held for the purpose of meeting short-term cash commitments rather than for investment purposes, and which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Total cash and deposits disclosed in the balance sheet	17	5
Balance as per cash flow statement	17	5

The VEC does not hold a cash reserve in its bank accounts. Cash received from generation of income is generally paid into the State of Victoria bank account ('public account'). Similarly, VEC expenditure, including in the form of cheques drawn for the payments to its suppliers and creditors, are made via the public account. The public account remits to the VEC the cash required upon presentation of cheques by the VEC's suppliers or creditors.

These funding arrangements can result in the VEC having a notional shortfall in the cash at bank required for payment of unrepresented cheques at reporting date. At 30 June 2023, cash at bank included the notional shortfall for the payment of unrepresented cheques of \$1,323. (2022 - Nil)

7.1.1 Reconciliation of net result for the period to cash flow from operating activities

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Net result for the period	(9,605)	(242)
Non-cash movements		
Depreciation and amortisation of non-current assets	4,851	3,226
Movements in assets and liabilities		
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	855	(785)
(Increase)/decrease in inventories	1,802	(2,846)
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	68	(545)
Increase/(decrease) in payables	1,362	472
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	502	514
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities	(165)	(206)

7.2 Commitments for expenditure

Commitments for future expenditure include operating and capital commitments arising from contracts. These commitments are recorded at their nominal value and inclusive of the goods and services tax (GST). In addition, where it is considered appropriate and provides additional relevant information to users, the net present values of significant individual projects are stated. These future expenditures cease to be disclosed as commitments once the related liabilities are recognised in the balance sheet.

7.2.1 Total commitments payable

NOMINAL VALUE	LESS THAN 1 YEAR \$'000	1-5 YEARS \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
2023			
Joint electoral roll arrangement payable	2,301	2,301	4,602
Total other commitments	2,301	2,301	4,602
Total commitments (inclusive of GST)	2,301	2,301	4,602
Less GST recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office	(209)	(209)	(418)
Total commitments (exclusive of GST)	2,092	2,092	4,184
2022			
Accommodation services payable (i)	5,972	-	5,972
Joint electoral roll arrangement payable	2,141	4,283	6,424
Total other commitments	8,113	4,283	12,396
Total commitments (inclusive of GST)	8,113	4,283	12,396
Less GST recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office	(738)	(389)	(1,127)
Total commitments (exclusive of GST)	7,375	3,894	11,269

Note: (i) The lease agreements for the premises are held by the Shared Services Provider (SSP) through the Department of Treasury. Under the Centralised Accommodation Management (CAM) initiative of the Victorian Government responsibility for office accommodation and facilities management is centralised with SSP

Notes to the financial statements cont.

Note 8. Risks, contingencies and valuation judgements

The VEC is exposed to risk from its activities and outside factors. In addition, it is often necessary to make judgements and estimates associated with recognition and measurement of items in the financial statements. This section sets out financial instrument specific information (including exposures to financial risks), as well as those items that are contingent in nature or require a higher level of judgement to be applied, which for the VEC relates mainly to fair value determination.

Note 8.1 Financial instruments specific disclosures

Introduction

Financial instruments arise out of contractual agreements that give rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Due to the nature of the VEC's activities, certain financial assets and financial liabilities arise under statute rather than a contract. Such financial assets and financial liabilities do not meet the definition of financial instruments in AASB 132 *Financial Instruments: Presentation*. For example, statutory receivables arising from taxes, fines and penalties do not meet the definition of financial instruments as they do not arise under contract. However, guarantees issued by the treasurer on behalf of the VEC are financial instruments because, although authorised under statute, the terms and conditions for each financial guarantee may vary and are subject to an agreement.

The VEC applies AASB 9 *Financial Instruments* and classifies all of its financial assets based on the business model for managing the assets and the asset's contractual terms.

Categories of financial assets

Financial assets at amortised cost

Financial assets are measured at amortised costs if both the following criteria are met and the assets are not designated as fair value through net result:

- ▶ the assets are held by the VEC to collect the contractual cash flows, and
- ▶ the assets contractual terms give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interests.

These assets are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less any impairment.

The VEC recognises the following assets in this category:

- ▶ cash and deposits;
- ▶ receivables (excluding statutory receivables).

Categories of financial assets

Receivables and cash are financial instrument assets with fixed and determinable payments that are not quoted on an active market. They are initially measured at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial measurement, these are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment.

The VEC recognises the following assets in this category:

- ▶ cash and deposits;
- ▶ receivables (excluding statutory receivables).

Categories of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially recognised on the date they are originated. They are initially measured at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial recognition, these financial instruments are measured at amortised cost with any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value being recognised in profit and loss over the period of the interest-bearing liability, using the effective interest rate method.

The VEC recognises the following liabilities in this category:

- ▶ payables (excluding statutory payables); and
- ▶ borrowings (including lease liabilities).

Derecognition of financial assets

A financial asset (or, where applicable, a part of a financial asset or part of a group of similar financial assets) is derecognised when:

- ▶ the rights to receive cash flows from the asset have expired; or
- ▶ the VEC retains the right to receive cash flows from the asset, but has assumed an obligation to pay them in full without material delay to a third party under a 'pass through' arrangement; or
- ▶ the VEC has transferred its rights to receive cash flows from the asset either:
 - has transferred substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset; or
 - has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset, but has transferred control of the asset.

Where the VEC has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards or transferred control, the asset is recognised to the extent of the VEC's continuing involvement in the asset.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

A financial liability is derecognised when the obligation under the liability is discharged, cancelled or expires.

When an existing financial liability is replaced by another from the same lender or under substantially different terms, or the terms of an existing liability are substantially modified, such an exchange or modification is treated as a derecognition of the original liability and the recognition of a new liability. The difference in the respective carrying amounts is recognised as an 'other economic flow' in the comprehensive operating statement.

Reclassification of financial instruments

Subsequent to initial recognition reclassification of financial liabilities is not permitted. Financial assets are required to be reclassified between fair value through net result, fair value through other comprehensive income and amortised cost when and only when the VEC business model for managing its financial assets has changes such that its previous model would no longer apply.

However, the VEC is generally unable to change its business model because it is determined by the Performance Management Framework (PMF) and all Victorian government agencies are required to apply the PMF under the Standing Directions of the Assistant Treasurer 2018.

If under rare circumstances an asset is reclassified, the reclassification is applied prospectively from the reclassification date and previously recognised gains, losses or interest should not be restated. If the asset is reclassified to fair value, the fair value should be determined at the reclassification date and any gain or loss arising from a difference between the carrying amount and fair value is recognised in net result.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

8.1.1 Financial instruments: categorisation

	CASH AND DEPOSITS \$'000	FINANCIAL ASSETS AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	FINANCIAL LIABILITIES AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	2023 TOTAL \$'000
2023				
Contractual Financial assets				
Cash and deposits	17	-	-	17
Receivables (i)	-	709	-	709
Total contractual financial assets	17	709	-	726
Contractual Financial liabilities				
Payables (i)	-	-	2,843	2,843
Borrowings	-	-	133	133
Total contractual financial liabilities	-	-	2,976	2,976

Note: (i) The total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. GST input tax credit recoverable, and GST payables).

	CASH AND DEPOSITS \$'000	FINANCIAL ASSETS AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	FINANCIAL LIABILITIES AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	2022 TOTAL \$'000
2022				
Contractual Financial assets				
Cash and deposits	5	-	-	5
Receivables (i)	-	274	-	274
Total contractual financial assets	5	274	-	279
Contractual Financial liabilities				
Payables (i)	-	-	1,481	1,481
Borrowings	-	-	83	83
Total contractual financial liabilities	-	-	1,564	1,564

Note: (i) The total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. GST input tax credit recoverable, and GST payables).

8.1.2 Financial risk management objectives and policies

The main purpose in holding financial instruments is to prudentially manage the VEC's financial risks within the Government policy parameters.

The VEC's main financial risks include credit risk and liquidity risk. The VEC manages these financial risks in accordance with its financial risk management policy.

The VEC uses different methods to measure and manage the different risks to which it is exposed. Primary responsibility for the identification and management of financial risks rests with the Electoral Commissioner in consultation with the Audit and Risk Committee.

Financial instruments: Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the VEC would be unable to meet its financial obligations as and when they fall due. The VEC operates under the Government fair payments policy of settling financial obligations within 30 days and in the event of a dispute, making payments within 30 days from the date of resolution.

The VEC's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed in the face of the balance sheet. The VEC's exposure to liquidity risk is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

Financial instruments: Credit risk

Credit risk arises from the contractual financial assets of the VEC, which comprise cash and deposits, and non-statutory receivables. The VEC's exposure to credit risk arises from the potential default of a counter party on their contractual obligations resulting in financial loss to the VEC. Credit risk is measured at fair value and is monitored on a regular basis.

In addition, the VEC does not engage in hedging for its contractual financial assets and mainly obtains contractual financial assets that are on fixed interest, except for cash assets, which are mainly cash at bank. As with the policy for debtors, the VEC's policy is to only deal with banks with high credit ratings.

Provision of impairment for contractual financial assets is recognised when there is objective evidence that the VEC will not be able to collect a receivable. Objective evidence includes financial difficulties of the debtor, default payments, debts which are more than 60 days overdue, and changes in debtor credit ratings.

The carrying amount of contractual financial assets recorded in the financial statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents the VEC's maximum exposure to credit risk without taking account of the value of any collateral obtained. The VEC is not exposed to any material credit risk at balance date.

Impairment of financial assets under AASB 9

The VEC records the allowance for expected credit loss for the relevant financial instruments applying AASB 9's Expected Credit Loss approach. Subject to AASB 9 impairment assessment include the VEC's contractual receivables and statutory receivables.

Equity instruments are not subject to impairment under AASB 9. Other financial assets mandatorily measured or designated at fair value through net result are not subject to impairment assessment under AASB 9. While cash and cash equivalents are also subject to the impairment requirements of AASB 9, the identified impairment loss was immaterial.

There has been no material change to the VEC's credit risk profile in 2022-23.

Financial instruments: Market risk

The VEC's exposures to market risk are primarily through foreign currency risk. Objectives, policies and processes used to manage this risk are disclosed below.

Foreign currency risk

The VEC is exposed to foreign currency risk mainly through its payables relating to purchases of supplies and consumables from overseas. This is because of a limited amount of transactions denominated in foreign currencies and a relatively short timeframe between commitment and settlement.

Based on past and current assessment of economic outlook, it is deemed unnecessary for the VEC to enter into any hedging arrangements to manage the risk.

The VEC is not exposed to any material foreign currency risk.

Interest rate risk

Fair value interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. The VEC does not hold any interest-bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates.

The VEC has no exposure to cash flow interest rate risks as cash is non-interest bearing.

The VEC's financial assets and liabilities are all non-interest bearing, except lease liabilities which are at fixed interest rates.

8.2 Contingent assets and contingent liabilities

Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the balance sheet, but are disclosed and, if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable respectively.

Contingent assets

Contingent assets are possible assets that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity.

These are classified as either quantifiable, where the potential economic benefit is known, or non-quantifiable.

Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:

- ▶ possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity, or
- ▶ present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:
 - it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligations or
 - the amount of the obligations cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Contingent liabilities are also classified as either quantifiable or non-quantifiable.

There are no contingent assets or contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2023. (2022 – Nil)

8.3 Fair value determination

Significant judgement: Fair value measurements of assets and liabilities

Consistent with AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement, the VEC determines the policies and procedures for both recurring fair value measurements such as property, plant and equipment and financial instruments, in accordance with the requirements of AASB 13 and the relevant Financial Reporting Directions.

Fair value determination requires judgement and the use of assumptions. This section discloses the most significant assumptions used in determining fair values. Changes to assumptions could have a material impact on the results and financial position of the VEC.

This section sets out information on how the VEC determined fair value for financial reporting purposes. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

The following assets and liabilities are carried at fair value:

- ▶ property, plant and equipment.

In addition, the fair values of other assets and liabilities that are carried at amortised cost, also need to be determined for disclosure purposes.

The VEC determines the policies and procedures for determining fair values for both financial and non-financial assets and liabilities as required.

Fair value hierarchy

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy, described as follows, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole:

- ▶ Level 1 – Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
- ▶ Level 2 – Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable and
- ▶ Level 3 – Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, the VEC has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

In determining fair values a number of inputs are used. The VEC uses only Level 3 unobservable inputs.

- ▶ Level 3 – valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

How this section is structured

For those assets and liabilities for which fair values are determined, the following disclosures are provided:

- ▶ carrying amount and the fair value (which would be the same for those assets measured at fair value)
- ▶ which level of the fair value hierarchy was used to determine the fair value and
- ▶ in respect of those assets and liabilities subject to fair value determination using Level 3 inputs:
 - a reconciliation of the movements in fair values from the beginning of the year to the end and
 - details of significant unobservable inputs used in the fair value determination.

This section is divided between disclosures in connection with fair value determination for financial instruments (refer to Note 8.3.1) and non-financial physical assets (refer to Note 8.3.2).

8.3.1 Fair value determination of financial assets and liabilities

The fair values and net fair values of financial assets and liabilities are determined as follows:

- ▶ Level 1 – the fair value of financial instrument with standard terms and conditions and traded in active liquid markets are determined with reference to quoted market prices:
- ▶ Level 2 – the fair value is determined using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the financial asset or liability, either directly or indirectly; and
- ▶ Level 3 – the fair value is determined in accordance with generally accepted pricing models based on discounted cash flow analysis using unobservable market inputs.

The VEC considers that the carrying amount of financial instrument assets and liabilities recorded in the financial statements to be a fair approximation of their fair values, because of the short-term nature of the financial instruments and the expectation that they will be paid in full.

8.3.2 Fair value determination: Non-financial physical assets

Fair value measurement hierarchy for assets as at 30 June 2023

	CARRYING AMOUNT	FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENT AT END OF		
	(\$'000)	REPORTING PERIOD USING: (\$'000)		
2023	as at 30 June 2023	Level 1 (i)	Level 2 (i)	Level 3 (i)
Property, plant and equipment at fair value	5,312	-	-	5,312
Total of property, plant and equipment at fair value	5,312	-	-	5,312

	CARRYING AMOUNT	FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENT AT END OF		
	(\$'000)	REPORTING PERIOD USING: (\$'000)		
2022	as at 30 June 2022	Level 1 (i)	Level 2 (i)	Level 3 (i)
Property, plant and equipment at fair value	4,713	-	-	4,713
Total of property, plant and equipment at fair value	4,713	-	-	4,713

Note: (i) Classified in accordance with the fair value hierarchy, see Note 8.3.1

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Plant, equipment, fixtures and fittings and vehicles

Plant, equipment, fixtures and fittings and equipment are held at fair value. When plant and equipment is specialised in use, such that it is rarely sold other than as part of a going concern, fair value is determined using the current replacement cost method.

There have been no transfers between levels during the period.

There were no changes in valuation techniques throughout the period to 30 June 2023.

For all assets measured at fair value, the current use is considered the highest and best use.

Reconciliation of Level 3 fair value movements

	PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT \$'000
2023	
Opening balance	4,713
Purchases (sales)	2,630
Disposals	(12)
Depreciations	(2,019)
Closing balance	5,312
2022	
Opening balance	4,546
Purchases (sales)	1,499
Disposals	(71)
Depreciations	(1,261)
Closing balance	4,713

Description of significant unobservable inputs to Level 3 valuations

	VALUATION TECHNIQUE	SIGNIFICANT UNOBSERVABLE INPUTS
Plant, equipment, fixtures & fittings and vehicles	Current replacement cost	Useful life

Note 9: Other disclosures

Introduction

This section includes additional material disclosures required by accounting standards or otherwise, for the understanding of this financial report.

STRUCTURE

9.1	Ex-gratia expenses
9.2	Other economic flows included in net result
9.3	Economic dependency
9.4	Responsible persons
9.5	Remuneration of executives
9.6	Related parties
9.7	Remuneration of auditors
9.8	Subsequent events
9.9	Other accounting policies
9.10	Australian Accounting Standards issued that are not yet effective
9.11	Glossary of technical terms and style conventions

9.1 Ex-gratia expenses

The VEC made no ex-gratia payments during the reporting period. (2022 - Nil)

9.2 Other economic flows included in net result

Other economic flows are changes in the volume or value of an asset or liability that do not result from transactions. Other gains/(losses) from other economic flows include the gains or losses from:

- ▶ the revaluation of the present value of the long service leave liability due to changes in the bond interest rates
- ▶ reclassified amounts relating to available-for-sale financial instruments from the reserves to net result due to a disposal or derecognition of the financial instrument. This does not include reclassification between equity accounts due to machinery of government changes or 'other transfers' of assets.

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Net gain/(loss) on non-financial assets		
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property plant and equipment	13	61
Other gain/(loss) from other economic flows		
Net gain/(loss) arising from revaluation of long service liability (i)	55	311
Total net gain/(loss) from other economic flows	68	372
Total Other economic flows included in net result	68	372

Note: (i) Revaluation gain/(loss) due to changes in bond rates

9.3 Economic dependency

The Victorian Electoral Commission is dependent upon the State of Victoria, via the Department of Premier and Cabinet, for the funding of its operations. At the date of this report, management has no reason to believe that this financial support will not continue.

9.4 Responsible persons

In accordance with the Ministerial Directions issued by the Assistant Treasurer under the *Financial Management Act 1994*, the following disclosures are made regarding responsible persons for the reporting period.

Section 7 of the *Electoral Act 2002* states that the 'Commission (the VEC) consists of one member being the person who is appointed as the Electoral Commissioner'. Section 10 of the *Electoral Act 2002* also states that the VEC is not subject to the direction or control of the Minister in respect of the performance of its responsibilities and functions and the exercise of its powers, therefore the accountable officer including a person delegated to act in this capacity by the VEC is listed below.

Section 16(2) – Functions, powers and duties of the *Electoral Act 2002* states that if the Electoral Commissioner is absent or unavailable to discharge the duties of his or her office or the office of Electoral Commissioner is temporarily vacant, the Deputy Commissioner has all the functions, powers and duties specified in subsection (1) being the functions, powers and duties of the Electoral Commissioner as delegated by the Commission (the VEC).

Names

Responsible Minister

The Hon. Danny Pearson MP
 Minister for Government Services since June 2020
 Minister for Worksafe and TAC since December 2022
 Minister for Consumer Affairs since
 December 2022
 Minister for Regulatory Reform June 2020 to
 December 2022
 Minister for Housing June 2022 to December 2022
 Assistant Treasurer since June 2020

Accountable Officer

Mr Warwick Gately AM
 Electoral Commissioner – Accountable Officer
 1 July 2021 to 29 April 2023

Ms Dana Fleming
 Acting Electoral Commissioner
 18 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Remuneration of Responsible Persons

The Responsible Persons, excluding ministers, received remuneration for the financial year ended 30 June 2023. The number of Responsible Persons whose total remuneration in connection with the affairs of the VEC as shown in the following bands, were:

INCOME BAND	TOTAL REMUNERATION 30 JUNE 2023 NO.	TOTAL REMUNERATION 30 JUNE 2022 NO.
\$50,000 - \$59,999	-	-
\$280,000 - \$289,999	-	-
\$310,000 - \$319,999	1	-
\$370,000 - \$379,999	-	1
\$400,000 - \$409,999	1	-
Total number of responsible persons (i)	2	1
	\$'000	\$'000
Total remuneration received, or due and receivable by Responsible Persons from VEC Services for the financial period	724	377

Note: (i) The Deputy Electoral Commissioner was previously incorrectly reported as an accountable officer. This was adjusted in 2023 and comparative figures were re-stated accordingly.

9.5 Remuneration of executives

There were no other Executive Officers with key management responsibilities in the 2022-23 financial year. (2022 - Nil)

9.6 Related parties

The VEC is a wholly owned and controlled entity of the State of Victoria.

Related parties of the VEC include:

- ▶ all key management personnel and their close family members and personal business interests (controlled entities, joint ventures and entities they have significant influence over)
- ▶ all cabinet ministers and their close family members
- ▶ all departments and public sector entities that are controlled and consolidated into the whole of state consolidated financial statements.

All related party transactions have been entered into on an arm's length basis.

Significant transactions with government-related entities

Controlled

The VEC received funding from the Consolidated Fund of \$140.6 million (2022: \$50.1 million).

Administered

The VEC received funding and made payments to the Consolidated Fund of \$21.4 million (2021: \$12.6 million) and \$1.3 million (2021: \$8.6 million) respectively.

Remuneration of Key Management Personnel (KMP) of the VEC include:

Mr Warwick Gately AM, Electoral Commissioner
Ms Dana Fleming, Acting Electoral Commissioner
Ms Máiréad Doyle, Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner

The compensation below excludes the salaries and benefits the Portfolio Minister receives. The Minister's remuneration and allowances is set by the *Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968* and is reported within the State's Annual Financial Report.

Compensation of KMPs

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Short-term benefits	597	596
Post-employment benefits	55	58
Other long-term benefits	-	8
Termination benefits	122	-
Total compensation	774	662

Transactions and balances with key management personnel and other related parties

Given the breadth and depth of State government activities, related parties transact with the Victorian public sector in a manner consistent with other members of the public, e.g. stamp duty and other government fees and charges. Further employment processes within the Victorian public sector occur on terms and consistent with the *Public Administration Act 2004* and Codes of Conduct and Standards issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission. Procurement processes occur on terms and conditions consistent with the Victorian Government Purchasing Board requirements.

Outside of normal citizen type transactions with the VEC, there were no related party transactions that involved key management personnel, their close family members and their personal business interests. No provision has been required, nor any expense recognised, for impairment of receivables from related parties.

The VEC has prepared the related party disclosures for the year based on reasonable enquiries made by management in relation to the portfolio ministers and their related parties and the information available to the organisation.

There were no related party transactions that involved key management personnel, their close family members and their personal business interests. No provision has been required, nor any expense recognised, for impairment of receivables from related parties.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

9.7 Remuneration of auditors

VICTORIAN AUDITOR GENERAL'S OFFICE	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Audit of the financial statements	28	25
Total remuneration of auditors	28	25

9.8 Subsequent events

The Victorian Electoral Commission has no material or significant events occurring after the reporting date. However, the VEC has announced the appointment of a new Electoral Commissioner commencing effective from 15 August 2023.

9.9 Other accounting policies

Contributions by owners

Consistent with the requirements of AASB 1004 *Contributions*, contributions by owners (that is, contributed capital and its repayment) are treated as equity transactions and, therefore, do not form part of the income and expenses of the VEC.

Additions to net assets that have been designated as contributions are recognised as contributed capital. Other transfers that are in the nature of contributions to or distributions by owners have also been designated as contributions by owners.

9.10 Australian Accounting Standards Boards issued that are not yet effective

Certain new AASBs have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2023 reporting period. DTF assesses the impact of these new standards and advises the VEC of their applicability and early adoption where applicable.

As at 30 June 2023, the following AASBs have been issued by the AASB but are not yet effective. They become effective for the first financial statements for reporting periods commencing after the stated operative dates as follows:

STANDARD/ INTERPRETATION	SUMMARY	APPLICABLE FOR ANNUAL REPORTING PERIODS BEGINNING	IMPACT ON VEC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AASB 2022-5 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Lease Liability in a Sale and Leaseback	<p>AASB 2022-5 amends AASB 16 Leases to add subsequent measurement requirements for sale and leaseback transactions that satisfy the requirements for sale in AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers.</p> <p>The amendments ensure that a seller-lessee subsequently remeasures lease liabilities arising from a leaseback in a way that does not recognise any amount of gain or loss that related to the right of use it retains.</p>	1 Jan 2024	The VEC is in the process of analysing the impacts of this Standard. However, it is not anticipated to have a material impact.

STANDARD/ INTERPRETATION	SUMMARY	APPLICABLE FOR ANNUAL REPORTING PERIODS BEGINNING	IMPACT ON VEC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
<p>AASB 2022-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets of Not-for-Profit public Sector Entities.</p>	<p>AASB 2022-10 amends AASB 13 Fair value Measurement by adding authoritative implementation guidance and illustrative examples for fair value measurements of non-financial assets of not-for-profit public sector entities not held primarily for their ability to generate net cash inflows.</p> <p>Among other things, the Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ specifies that an entity needs to consider whether an asset's highest and best use differs from its current use only when it is held for sale or held for distributions to owners under AASB5 Non-current Assets Held for Sale and Discontinued Operations or if it is highly probable that it will be used for an alternative purpose; ▶ clarifies that an asset's use is 'financially feasible' if market participants would be willing to invest in the asset's service capacity, considering both the capacity to provide needed goods or services and the resulting costs of those goods and services; ▶ specifies that if both market selling price and some market participant data required to fair value the asset are not observable, an entity needs to start with its own assumptions and adjust them to the extent that reasonably available information indicates that other market participants would use different data; and ▶ provides guidance on the application of the cost approach to fair value, including the nature of costs to be included in a reference asset and identification of economic obsolescence. <p>This Standard applies prospectively to annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2024, with earlier application permitted. The Commission will not early adopt the Standard.</p>	<p>1 Jan 2024</p>	<p>The VEC is in the process of analysing the impacts of this Standard. However, it is not anticipated to have a material impact.</p>

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

STANDARD/ INTERPRETATION	SUMMARY	APPLICABLE FOR ANNUAL REPORTING PERIODS BEGINNING	IMPACT ON VEC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
<p>AASB 17 Insurance Contracts</p> <p>AASB 2022-8 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Insurance Contracts: Consequential Amendments</p> <p>AASB 2022-9 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Insurance Contracts in the Public Sector</p>	<p>AASB 17 replaces AASB 4 Insurance Contracts, AASB 1023 General Insurance Contracts and AASB 1038 Life Insurance Contracts for not-for-profit public sector entities for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 July 2026.</p> <p>AASB 2022-9 amends AASB 17 to make public sector-related modifications (for example, it specifies the pre-requisites, indicators and other considerations in identifying arrangements that fall within the scope of AASB 17 in a public sector context). This Standard applies for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 July 2026.</p> <p>AASB2022-8 makes consequential amendments to other Australian Accounting Standards so that public sector entities are permitted to continue to apply AASB 4 and AASB 1023 to annual periods before 1 July 2026.</p>	1 July 2026	<p>The VEC is in the process of analysing the impacts of this Standard. However, it is not anticipated to have a material impact.</p>

STANDARD/ INTERPRETATION	SUMMARY	APPLICABLE FOR ANNUAL REPORTING PERIODS BEGINNING	IMPACT ON VEC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AASB 2020-1 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-Current and AASB 2022-6 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards- Non-current Liabilities with Covenants.	<p>This Standard amends AASB 101 to clarify requirements for the presentation of liabilities in the statement of financial position as current or non-current. It initially applied to annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2022 with earlier adoption permitted however the AASB has recently issued AASB2020-1 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current - Deferral of Effective Date with the intention to defer the application by one year to periods beginning on or after 1 January 2023. The Commission will not early adopt the Standard.</p> <p>AASB 2020-6 subsequently amended AASB 2020-1, deferring the mandatory effective date of AASB 2020-1 from 1 January 2022 to 1 January 2023. AASB 2022-6 was applicable for annual reporting periods on or after 1 January 2022.</p> <p>AASB 2022-6 amends and clarifies the requirements contained in AASB2020-1. Among other things, it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ clarifies that only covenants that an entity must comply with at or before the reporting date affect a liability's classification as current or non-current; and ▶ requires additional disclosures for non-current liabilities that are subject to an entity complying with covenants within twelve months after the reporting date. 	1 Jan 2023	The VEC is in the process of analysing the impacts of this Standard. However, it is not anticipated to have a material impact.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Several other amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to future reporting periods, but are considered to have limited impact on the VEC's reporting.

9.11 Glossary of technical terms and style conventions

Glossary

Amortisation

Amortisation is the expense which results from the consumption, extraction or use over time of a non-produced physical or intangible asset. This expense is classified as an 'other economic flow'.

Borrowings

Borrowings refers to leases.

Comprehensive result

The net result of all items of income and expense recognised for the period. It is the aggregate of operating result and other comprehensive income.

Commitments

Commitments include those operating, capital and other outsourcing commitments arising from non-cancellable contractual or statutory sources.

Depreciation

Depreciation is an expense that arises from the consumption through wear or time of a produced physical or intangible asset. This expense is classified as a 'transaction' and so reduces the 'net result from transaction'.

Employee benefits expenses

Employee benefits expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, redundancy payments, defined benefit superannuation plans and defined contribution superannuation plans.

Ex-gratia payments

Ex-gratia expenses mean the voluntary payment of money or other non-monetary benefit (e.g. a write off) that is not made either to acquire goods, services or other benefits for the entity or to meet a legal liability, or to settle or resolve a possible legal liability or claim against the entity.

Financial asset

A financial asset is any asset that is:

- a. cash;
- b. an equity instrument of another entity;
- c. a contractual or statutory right:
 - to receive cash or another financial asset from another entity; or
 - to exchange financial assets or financial liabilities with another entity under conditions
 - that are potentially favourable to the entity; or
- d. a contract that will or may be settled in the entity's own equity instruments and is:
 - a non-derivative for which the entity is or may be obliged to receive a variable number of the entity's own equity instruments; or
 - a derivative that will or may be settled other than by the exchange of a fixed amount of cash or another financial asset for a fixed number of the entity's own equity instruments.

Financial instrument

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial assets or liabilities that are non contractual (such as statutory receivables or payables that arise as a result of statutory requirements imposed by governments) are not financial instruments.

Financial liability

A financial liability is any liability that is:

- a. a contractual obligation:
 - i. To deliver cash or another financial asset to another entity; or
 - ii. To exchange financial assets or financial liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially unfavourable to the entity; or
- b. A contract that will or may be settled in the entity's own equity instruments and is:
 - i. A non-derivative for which the entity is or may be obliged to deliver a variable number of the entity's own equity instruments; or
 - ii. A derivative that will or may be settled other than by the exchange of a fixed amount of cash or another financial asset for a fixed number of the entity's own equity instruments. For this purpose the entity's own equity instruments do not include instruments that are themselves contracts for the future receipt or delivery of the entity's own equity instruments.

Financial statements

A complete set of financial statements comprises:

- a. balance sheet as at the end of the period;
- b. a comprehensive operating statement for the period;
- c. a statement of changes in equity for the period;
- d. a cash flow statement for the period;
- e. notes, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information;
- f. comparative information in respect of the preceding period as specified in paragraphs 38 of AASB 101 *Presentation of Financial Statements*; and
- g. a statement of financial position as at the beginning of the preceding period when an entity applies an accounting policy retrospectively or makes a retrospective restatement of items in its financial statements, or when it reclassifies items in its financial statements in accordance with paragraphs 41 of AASB 101.

General government sector

The general government sector comprises all government departments, offices and other bodies engaged in providing services free of charge or at prices significantly below their cost of production. General government services include those which are mainly non-market in nature those which are largely for collective consumption by the community and those which involve the transfer or redistribution of income. These services are financed mainly through taxes, or other compulsory levies and user charges.

Intangible produced assets

Refer to produced assets in this glossary.

Interest expense

Costs incurred in connection with the borrowing of funds includes the interest component, of finance lease repayments.

Net result

Net result is a measure of financial performance of the operations for the period. It is the net result of items of income, gains and expenses (including losses) recognised for the period, excluding those that are classified as 'other economic flows – other comprehensive income'.

Net worth

Assets less liabilities, which is an economic measure of wealth.

Other economic flows included in net result

Other economic flows included in net result are changes in the volume or value of an asset or liability that do not result from transactions. It includes gains and losses from disposals, revaluations and impairments of non-financial physical and intangible assets and fair value changes of financial instruments.

Other economic flows – other comprehensive income

Other economic flows – other comprehensive income comprises items (including reclassification adjustments) that are not recognised in net result as required or permitted by other Australian Accounting Standards.

Notes to the financial statements cont.

for the financial year ended 30 June 2023

Payables

Includes short and long term trade debt and accounts payable, grants, taxes and interest payable.

Produced assets

Produced assets include plant and equipment, inventories and certain intangible assets. Intangible produced assets include computer software.

Receivables

Includes amounts owing from government through appropriation receivable, short and long term trade credit and accounts receivable.

Sales of goods and services

Refers to income from the direct provision of goods and services and includes fees and charges for services rendered, sales of goods and services, fees from regulatory services and work done as an agent for private enterprises. It also includes rental income under operating leases and on produced assets such as buildings and entertainment, but excludes rent income from the use of non-produced assets such as land. User charges includes sale of goods and services income.

Supplies and services

Supplies and services generally represent cost of goods sold and the day-to-day running costs, including maintenance costs, incurred in the normal operations of the Commission.

Transactions

Transactions are those economic flows that are considered to arise as a result of policy decisions, usually an interaction between 2 entities by mutual agreement. They also include flows within an entity such as depreciation where the owner is simultaneously acting as the owner of the depreciating asset and as the consumer of the service provided by the asset. Taxation is regarded as mutually agreed interactions between the government and taxpayers. Transactions can be in kind (e.g. assets provided/given free of charge or for nominal consideration) or where the final consideration is cash. In simple terms, transactions arise from the policy decisions of the government.

Style conventions

Figures in the tables and in the text have been rounded. Discrepancies in tables between totals and sums of components reflect rounding. Percentage variations in all tables are based on the underlying unrounded amounts.

The notation used in the tables is as follows:

- zero, or rounded to zero

(xxx.x) negative numbers

20xx year period

20xx-xx year period

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Commissioner of the Victorian Electoral Commission

Opinion	<p>I have audited the financial report of the Victorian Electoral Commission (the Commission) which comprises the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• balance sheet as at 30 June 2023• comprehensive operating statement for the year then ended• statement of changes in equity for the year then ended• cash flow statement for the year then ended• notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies• declaration in the financial statements. <p>In my opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Commission as at 30 June 2023 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 7 of the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i> and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.</p>
Basis for opinion	<p>I have conducted my audit in accordance with the <i>Audit Act 1994</i> which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the <i>Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report</i> section of my report.</p> <p>My independence is established by the <i>Constitution Act 1975</i>. My staff and I are independent of the Commission in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 <i>Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants</i> (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.</p> <p>I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.</p>
The Commissioner's responsibilities for the financial report	<p>The Commissioner is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>, and for such internal control as the Commissioner determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.</p> <p>In preparing the financial report, the Commissioner is responsible for assessing the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.</p>

Auditor-General's report cont.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Commission's internal control.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Commissioner.
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Commissioner's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Commission to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Commissioner regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

MELBOURNE
28 August 2023



Janaka Kumara
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

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Governing legislation and regulations

Legislation

- ▶ *Agricultural Industry Development Act 1990*
- ▶ *Building Act 1993*
- ▶ *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- ▶ *City of Greater Geelong Act 1993*
- ▶ *City of Melbourne Act 2001*
- ▶ *Constitution Act 1975*
- ▶ *Electoral Act 2002*
- ▶ *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982*
- ▶ *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- ▶ *Essential Services Act 1958*
- ▶ *Financial Management Act 1994*
- ▶ *Fines Reform Act 2014*
- ▶ *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- ▶ *Infringements Act 2006*
- ▶ *Juries Act 2000*
- ▶ *Legal Profession Act 2004*
- ▶ *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*
- ▶ *Local Government Act 2020*
- ▶ *Local Jobs Act 2003*
- ▶ *Monetary Units Act 2004*
- ▶ *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- ▶ *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*
- ▶ *Public Records Act 1973*
- ▶ *Shop Trading Reform Act 1996*
- ▶ *Vital State Projects Act 1976*

Regulations

- ▶ *Agricultural Industry Development (Polls) Regulations 2011*
- ▶ *City of Melbourne (Electoral) Regulations 2012*
- ▶ *Electoral Regulations 2012*
- ▶ *Fines Reform Regulations 2017*
- ▶ *Financial Management Regulations 2014*
- ▶ *Infringements (General) Regulations 2006*
- ▶ *Infringements (Reporting and Prescribed Details and Forms) Regulations 2006*
- ▶ *Legal Profession (Board Election) Regulations 2006*
- ▶ *Liquor Control Reform Regulations 2009*
- ▶ *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2016 (to 7 July 2020)*
- ▶ *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (from 7 July 2020)*

Additional information available on request

On request, the following information sets are available from the VEC:

- ▶ details of publications produced by the VEC about itself, and where these can be obtained
- ▶ details of changes in prices, fees, charges, rates and levies charged by the VEC
- ▶ details of any major external reviews carried out in respect of the operation of the VEC
- ▶ details of major research and development activities undertaken by the VEC that are not otherwise covered in this report
- ▶ details of overseas visits undertaken, including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit
- ▶ details of assessments and measures undertaken to improve the occupational health and safety of employees, not otherwise detailed in this report
- ▶ a general statement on industrial relations within the VEC and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes.

Reporting procedures under the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012¹

Disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the Electoral Commissioner or another officer of the VEC must be made to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

GPO Box 24234
Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone 1300 735 135

Further information

Written guidelines outlining the system for reporting disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the VEC or its employees, and the disclosure handling procedures, are available from the VEC.

Making a request under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

As detailed in section 17 of the FOI Act, access to documents may be obtained through written request to the Freedom of Information Officer.

In summary, requests should:

- ▶ be in writing
- ▶ identify as clearly as possible which document is being requested

and

- ▶ be accompanied by the appropriate application fee (the fee may be waived in certain circumstances).

Requests for documents in the possession of the VEC should be lodged by email to foi@vec.vic.gov.au or by mail addressed to:

Freedom of Information Officer

Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Access charges may also apply once documents have been processed and a decision on access is made; for example, photocopying and search and retrieval charges.

The VEC may arrange with the applicant to provide information or documents outside of the FOI Act. This avoids the need for processing a formal FOI request.

Information that may be released outside of the FOI Act includes:

- ▶ information relating only to the applicant
- ▶ information that may have been previously released to another applicant
- ▶ publicly available information.

Further information regarding Freedom of Information can be found at the Victorian Government Freedom of Information website (ovic.vic.gov.au).

¹ Formerly known as the *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*

Attestation for compliance



Victorian Electoral Commission

Financial Management Compliance Attestation Statement

The Victorian Electoral Commission has not identified any Material Compliance Deficiency in relation to 2022-23.

I, Sven Bluemmel, Electoral Commissioner, certify that the Victorian Electoral Commission has complied with the applicable Standing Directions of the Minister of Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and Instructions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Bluemmel', is written over a faint, illegible stamp.

Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner

Date: 17/2/2023

Asset Management Accountability (AMAF) maturity assessment for year ended 30 June 2023

The following summarises the VEC’s assessment of maturity against the requirements of the Asset Management Accountability Framework (AMAF). The VEC’s target maturity rating is ‘competence’, meaning systems and processes are fully in place, consistently applied and systematically meeting the AMAF requirement, including a continuous improvement process to expand system performance above AMAF minimum requirements.

Leadership and Accountability (requirements 1-19)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Planning (requirements 20-23)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Acquisition (requirements 24 and 25)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

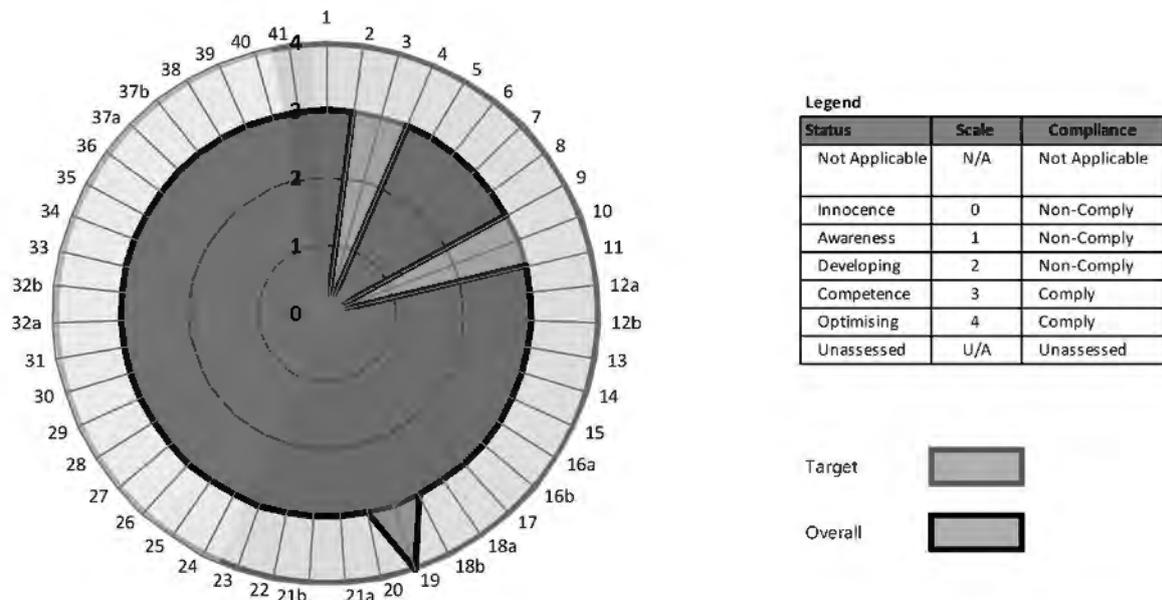
Operation (requirements 26-40)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Disposal (requirement 41)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Figure 31: VEC performance on AMAF metrics



Social Procurement

The VEC continues to commit to its social procurement strategy in 2022–23 in line with the Victorian social procurement framework and the VEC’s core legislative purpose.

The following table provides an overview of the objectives and achievements reportable in the year, which include activities related to State election 2022 readiness.

SOCIAL PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORK (SPF) OBJECTIVES	PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2022–23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Procured range of services from Indigenous businesses and suppliers including artwork, production of electoral engagement videos, cultural expertise to support better engagement of Aboriginal communities, dance performances and catering services. ▶ Supply of services and engagement initiatives with Indigenous groups such as Korin Gamadji Institute, Reconciliation Victoria, and representatives on the VEC Aboriginal Advisory Group to help promote electoral engagement across the Victorian Aboriginal community. <p>Number of business and suppliers engaged: 5 (2021–22: 4 suppliers)</p> <p>Total spend: \$100,000 (2021–22: \$129,386)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opportunities for Victorians with disability. ▶ Opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians. ▶ Supporting safe and fair workplaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Procured range of services, artworks and products from business supporting disadvantaged Victorians. Services include translation videos, Easy English training, focus groups, and catering supplies. ▶ Employment opportunities for casual Democracy Ambassadors with disabilities or those who have an understanding of homelessness to provide electoral education to the community in the lead-up to the 2022 State election. ▶ Supply of services and engagement initiatives with a range of key stakeholders such as YMCA Victoria Youth Services, VEC Electoral Access Advisory Group members, Homelessness Advisory Group members, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Advisory Group members and a range of community service providers to help promote electoral engagement across the Victorian community. <p>Number of business and suppliers engaged: 22 (2021–22: 11 suppliers)</p> <p>Total spend: \$390,500 (2021–22: \$286,426)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Environmentally sustainable outputs. ▶ Environmentally sustainable business practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Where possible, the VEC will continue to leverage from whole-of-government contracts and services that target sustainable and environmental benefits. ▶ The purchased of ballot material and paper from locally sourced providers in readiness for State election program. ▶ The VEC procured a range of services: environmentally friendly waste removal services, provisions of recycled cardboard services, general recycling services. <p>Number of business and suppliers engaged: 5 (2021–22: 4 suppliers)</p> <p>Total spend: \$612,000 (2021–22: \$2.776 million)</p>

Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2022–23

The Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) is constituted under the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982* (EBC Act) and must establish and maintain electorates of approximately equal enrolment (that is, not varying by more than 10% from the average for each House of Parliament) for the conduct of Parliamentary elections.

The members of the EBC during 2022–23 were:

- ▶ The Hon. Chief Judge Peter Kidd of the County Court of Victoria (Chair)
- ▶ Mr Warwick Gately AM, Electoral Commissioner (to~29 April 2023)
- ▶ Ms Dana Fleming, Acting Electoral Commissioner (from 29 April 2023)
- ▶ Mr Craig Sandy LS, Surveyor-General of Victoria.

The VEC provides administrative and technical support to the EBC and Ashley Carr, Manager, Information and Research is the secretary of the EBC.

The new electoral boundaries decided in the 2020–21 redivision came into effect at the November 2022 State election.

The EBC was not required to meet in 2022–23.



Electoral Boundaries
Commission

Attendance election

In an attendance election most voting is conducted at voting centres on election day, although voters may vote at early voting centres or by postal vote.

Ballot

A method of secret voting.

By-election

A by-election is an election in a single-member electorate to fill a casual vacancy caused by the departure of a sitting Member of Parliament or Local Government councillor before the term expires. A by-election may also be held in a multi-member electorate when no unsuccessful candidates remain for a countback.

Candidate

A candidate is an eligible elector who nominates for election.

Community of interest

The VEC defines a community of interest as a group of people who share a range of common concerns or aspirations. A community of interest may occur where people are linked with each other geographically (e.g. a town or valley) or economically, such as where people work in similar industries (e.g. tourism) or where people work in mutually-dependent industries (e.g. fruit growers, transporters and canners).

A community of interest may also appear where people share a number of special needs because of similar circumstances (such as new immigrants who may have little English, require assistance with housing or need help finding employment).

Compulsory enrolment

All Australian citizens 18 years and over are required by law to enrol.

Compulsory voting

All enrolled electors must vote at State elections. With some exceptions, enrolled voters must vote at Local Government elections.

Contested election

A contested election is an election where more candidates than the number of vacancies for the election have nominated by the close of nominations.

Continuous Roll Update (CRU)

The CRU process consists of a range of strategies to ensure that the electoral roll is continuously kept up-to-date by using internal and external data to direct roll review activities to targeted people and residences.

Councillor

An elected representative on a Local Government council.

Countback

Method of filling extraordinary vacancies in multi-member wards and unsubdivided municipalities in electorates where general election results were obtained using the proportional representation method. The votes of the vacating councillor are transferred to the previously unelected candidates to fill the vacancy.

District

One of the 88 Legislative Assembly electorates in Victoria. Each District elects one member and comprises approximately 50,500 electors.

Election

An event at which electors choose their representatives.

Election date

The legislated date of the election.

Election Manager

A person appointed by the Electoral Commissioner to conduct an election for an electoral district or region.

Electors

A person whose name appears on the register of electors and who is entitled to vote in elections.

Electoral Commissioner

The statutory officer appointed by the Governor-in-Council with responsibility for the proper conduct of parliamentary and statutory elections.

Electoral Matters Committee (EMC)

The EMC comprises nine Members of Parliament drawn from both Houses and is a Joint Investigatory Committee of the Parliament of Victoria. Its powers and responsibilities are determined by the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*. The EMC inquires into, considers and reports to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with the conduct of parliamentary elections and referendums in Victoria, the conduct of elections of councillors under the *Local Government Act 1989* and the administration of, or practices associated with, the *Electoral Act 2002* and any other law relating to electoral matters.

Electoral roll

A list of names of all the people who are entitled to vote in an election under relevant legislation.

Electronically Assisted Voting

A method of casting a vote under legislation by electors who are blind or have low vision, are not literate in English, have a motor impairment or are located interstate or overseas.

Enrolment

The placement of a person's name and address on the Register of Electors. A person cannot vote at an election unless they are enrolled.

Enrolment information

The information about electors that is held by the VEC.

Entitlement date

To be eligible to vote at a Local Government election, people must be on the State or Local Government voters roll 57 days before election day. This is called the 'entitlement date'.

Geo-coding

Geo-coding is the process of assigning geographic identifiers (e.g. codes or geographic coordinates expressed as latitude-longitude) to map features and other data records, such as street addresses.

Informal vote

A ballot paper that is either left blank or is incorrectly marked. These ballot papers do not contribute to the election of a candidate.

Glossary cont.

Legislative Assembly (Lower House)

One of the two Houses in the Victorian State Parliament. There are 88 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), one from each electoral district. The party or coalition of parties that wins majority support in this House forms the Government.

Legislative Council (Upper House)

One of the two Houses in the Victorian State Parliament. There are 40 Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs), five from each region. The Legislative Council is often referred to as the 'House of review'.

Lost Time Injury (LTI)

An LTI is an occupational injury or illness that results in days away from work on any rostered shift subsequent to that on which the injury occurred. A fatality is also recorded as an LTI.

Marginal costs

Marginal costs include direct labour and associated on-costs, materials, equipment, mail processing, postage, advertising, printing, rent, utilities, insurance, IT equipment and software licences purchased especially for the specific activity.

Postal election

In an all-postal election, voting papers are posted to voters by the Returning Officer. A vote is cast by completing a ballot paper and returning it to the Returning Officer in the reply-paid envelope provided.

Preferential voting

A vote for all candidates in order of preference. If no candidate has an absolute majority of first preference votes, preferences are distributed until one candidate has an absolute majority.

Proportional representation

A system of voting designed to elect representatives in proportion to the amount of support each has in the electorate.

Redivision

The redrawing of electoral boundaries to ensure that there are, as near as possible, equal numbers of voters in each electorate within Victoria.

Region

One of the eight Legislative Council electorates. Each region comprises approximately 555,500 electors and elects five Members.

Register of Electors

The VEC's database of all Victorian electors.

Registered Political Party (RPP)

A political party that is registered under the *Electoral Act 2002*. A registered party must have at least 500 members who are Victorian electors and not members of another registered political party.

Resource Smart Committee (RSC)

Comprising a representative from each branch of the VEC and a member of the VEC Management Group, the Resource Smart Committee oversees the implementation of the VEC's Environmental Management Plan.

Senior Election Official

A trained election official who may be appointed to act as an Election Manager for a parliamentary election. Senior Election Officials may also be appointed to act as Returning Officers or Deputy Returning Officers for a Local Government election.

Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC)

The VEC is the independent statutory body that conducts State elections and certain statutory elections. The VEC conducts Local Government elections, and commercial and community elections. The VEC also conducts boundary reviews and electoral research, maintains the Victorian electoral enrolment register and provides education and inclusion services.

Voter

An elector who votes in an election.

Voting centre

A place at which electors can vote in an election. There are three types of voting centres that operate in State elections: early voting centres, mobile voting centres and election day voting centres.

Feedback on this report is welcome.
Please mark to the attention of:

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(Victorian Electoral Commission)
October 2023

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