



**2023 Narracan District
supplementary election**

Service plan



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(Victorian Electoral Commission)
December 2022

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) pays respect to Victoria's traditional owners and their elders past and present 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.

Note:

This election service plan is also available on the VEC's website at vec.vic.gov.au in Microsoft Word and PDF format



On Saturday 28 January 2023, approximately 50,000 eligible Victorians will be required to cast their vote to elect the Member of Parliament for the Narracan District in a supplementary election.

During the 2022 State general election, the Narracan District election was declared a failed election due to the death of Nationals Party candidate, Mr Shaun Gilchrist, on Sunday 20 November 2022. Under Victoria's electoral laws if a candidate dies before 6 pm on election day (Saturday 26 November 2022), the election for that district is declared 'failed' and a supplementary election is to be held.

As the responsible agency, the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) will manage every element of the Narracan District supplementary election a strict statutory regime, requiring forward planning, strong project management, attention to detail and discipline.

Under the *Electoral Act 2022*, a supplementary election must be held on the electoral roll that was prepared for the purpose of the election that has failed. Therefore, the Narracan District supplementary election will be held on the electoral roll prepared for the 2022 Victorian State election.

This election will consume financial, logistical, human and administrative resources, and the VEC must exercise fiscal responsibility without compromising integrity or service delivery standards.

All the VEC's activities must withstand the closest scrutiny. Actions and decisions taken need to be transparent and compliant so that public confidence in the VEC's ability to deliver an impartial, fair, accurate and timely election result is maintained. Importantly, recent changes in electors' voting behaviour must be considered, particularly the growth in the number of electors choosing to vote early, including by post.

Noting the above, the environment within which the election will be conducted is uncertain. The impact of COVID-19 in the community continues and the VEC's preparations must consider this significant factor. This also may force late but necessary changes to this plan. The health and safety of all election participants will be paramount.

The comprehensive nature of this plan can give the public confidence and reassurance about the VEC's independence, transparency and its capability in delivering the Narracan District supplementary election. Election objectives, priorities, initiatives, performance measures and action plans are among many of the matters covered and to which staff effort will be focused. Importantly, this election plan will provide a basis upon which the VEC's performance can be assessed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Fleming', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dana Fleming
Acting Electoral Commissioner

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Background and purpose

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to establish the plan for the conduct of the Narracan District supplementary election.

This document is to be used to gain a clear understanding of the services delivered by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC).

Guiding principles

The Narracan District supplementary election is conducted on established and accepted principles.

The VEC will:

- follow State electoral law, and apply it impartially and equitably, with all participants in the process treated fairly and justly
- perform all tasks in a non-partisan and politically neutral manner to the highest standard of accuracy
- work to provide every elector with a quality and convenient service in which to exercise their democratic rights.

Legal framework

The VEC is responsible for the conduct of all Victorian State general, supplementary and by-elections. The VEC's election operations are governed by 5 main pieces of legislation:

- *Electoral Act 2002*: establishes the VEC as an independent statutory authority and sets out the processes for State elections, including the timeframe for the conduct of the election.

- *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.
- *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982*: governs the determination of State electoral boundaries. Under this legislation the Electoral Commissioner is one of three members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.
- *Infringements Act 2006 and Fines Reform Act 2014*: provides for stages two, three and four of compulsory voting enforcement.

All procedures and processes implemented by the VEC during the Narracan District supplementary election consider each piece of legislation and implement prescribed rules accordingly. These include processes prescribed in the regulations, which are made under the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Privacy

The VEC is bound by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, as well as other laws, that impose obligations on the handling of personal and health information. The VEC privacy policy provides guidance to VEC officers on the management of personal information and supports the VEC's need to collect information and the right of the individual to privacy. All privacy enquiries and concerns should be directed to the VEC Privacy Officer.

Statement of Intent

Victorians who are eligible to vote will do so at an election that is:

- fully compliant with State law
- transparent
- fair and accurate
- delivered with efficiency, enthusiasm and to the highest standards.

This intent is aligned with the VEC's vision and purpose: 'All Victorians actively participating in their democracy'. This single intent will be the premise for all election plans and projects. It will assist decision-making, actions and the priorities associated with the allocation of resources.

To meet this intent, the following major operational objectives were identified:

- implement the use of the Narracan District electoral roll prepared for the original election, the 2022 State election.
- provide every eligible elector with a voting experience that is:
 - safe, convenient and easy to access
 - timely to their requirements
 - easy to understand
 - respectful and courteous
 - confidential
- assist candidates, Registered Political Parties and other participants to meet nomination and other compliance requirements

- provide electoral information to all stakeholders in a format that is easy to understand and use, easy to find, rapid and deliverable through a variety of media
- ensure all votes cast are accounted for, and counted accurately and efficiently, with results available in a timely manner
- maintain stakeholder confidence and trust in the VEC's capacity to deliver impartial, transparent, accurate and efficient electoral outcomes.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) planning

The VEC is focussed on delivering safe, convenient and accessible election programs. The VEC will ensure that its election services will be delivered in a way that:

- considers the safety of all participants in the provision of convenient and accessible election services
- enables successful management of the consequences of a COVID-19 outbreak
- complies with all State and Commonwealth directives and the relevant provisions of the Electoral Act and Regulations
- reassures Registered Political Parties, candidates, electors and the general public of the integrity of the election and its results.

The Narracan District supplementary election will utilise a COVIDSafe Election Handbook that summarises the COVIDSafe measures the VEC will have in place. The COVIDSafe Election Handbook will be updated as necessary as the environment or advice changes.

Electoral Integrity

The planning, delivery and evaluation of election programs has included a focus on having robust integrity and decision-making measures. These measures will focus on election office and head office compliance, as well as specific activities vital for election result integrity.

Complaints management

A dedicated team will manage feedback and complaints from the public received via an online submission form or in writing.

Complaints alleging a breach of the law should include any evidence. Any complaints lodged with the election office will be forwarded to the VEC head office for consideration and response.

Complainant confidentiality is protected and the VEC will not confirm or deny that a complaint has been received or discuss individual complaints with any other person or media.

Constructive compliance

A 'constructive compliance' approach is in place and focusses on providing electoral participants with resources to understand and comply with their obligations. Where necessary and appropriate, enforcement tools may be used to assist compliance.

Complaints alleging a breach of the law will be assessed and investigated or referred to another agency as appropriate. The VEC may institute legal proceedings against any person committing an offence against the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Court of Disputed Returns

The validity of the Narracan District supplementary election can only be disputed via a petition to the Court of Disputed Returns. The Supreme Court is the Court of Disputed Returns for the purpose of all Victorian State elections.

A petition to the Court of Disputed Returns must be filed with the Prothonotary of the Supreme Court within 40 days after the return of the writ.

An election can be disputed by a candidate, a person who was entitled to vote at the election in dispute, or the VEC.

Storage and disposal of ballot material

The VEC manages the security and storage of ballot material in accordance with section 122 of the *Electoral Act 2002* and associated regulations. All parcels are to be kept safely until the completion of any proceedings in the Court of Disputed Returns. Where no petition is filed with the Court of Disputed Returns, ballot material may be disposed of once the period of 40 days after the return of the writ has elapsed.

The disposal of ballot material is governed by standards and disposal authorities issued by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) and standards issued by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC). A certified copy of the electoral roll prepared for the original 2022 State election is retained permanently, initially by the VEC then transferred to PROV as a State Archive.

System security

The VEC has continued to strengthen its cyber security posture by implementing the Australian Signals Directorate's Essential Eight standards (ASD8) and deployed a range of other best-in-class security technology such as protection from Distributed denial-of-service (DDOS) attacks.

Significant work had been completed over several phases, with extensive in-house and external security testing and assurance which has placed the VEC's cyber security posture in a strong position to protect electoral information and systems.

Report to Parliament on the conduct of the Narracan District supplementary election

Under section 8(2)(b) of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC must report to Parliament within 12 months of the conduct of each election on the administration of that election. The report will include:

- analysis and summary of results and trends
- selected detailed statistics
- overview of the planning process
- details of the election budget
- election administration, staffing and infrastructure
- election services to voters, political parties, candidates and the media
- communication services
- innovations and special projects
- summary of count processes and transparency measures.

The report may also provide details of any recommendations for legislative change or research topics which will assist the conduct of future elections.

Election timeline

The Narracan District supplementary election timeline is defined in the *Electoral Act 2002*. The timeline is determined by the Governor of Victoria and can only be determined prior to the return of the writs of the preceding State General election.

The timeline for the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election, based on the writs being issued on Monday 19 December 2023, is included in Appendix 1.

Election service management

External service providers

Many aspects of the Narracan District supplementary election require the expertise of external service providers. Contracting these providers enables VEC staff to focus on their election-specific areas of expertise, ensuring that Victorians are provided with the highest quality election services, built on modern technology and systems.

For the Narracan District supplementary election, the VEC will have service agreements and contracts in place for a range of specialist services, including:

- Australia Post
- ballot paper printing services
- cardboard furniture and voting centre equipment
- cartage and courier services
- election advertising
- election staffing
- election staff on-line training
- envelope production
- information technology
- mail-house services
- public enquiry service.

Arrangements with other agencies

The VEC will ensure that arrangements are in place to respond to any legal or regulatory issues arising during the election as set out below.

Victorian Government Solicitor's Office

The VEC will arrange with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO) to have legal counsel on stand-by throughout the election timeline, to ensure that any legal matters can be dealt with in a timely fashion.

Victoria Police

The VEC will engage with Victoria Police before and throughout the election timeline. Interactions with Victoria Police have been supported by more streamlined referral and response processes and reflect active engagement with police to build their understanding of electoral offences.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

The VEC will plan with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for the timely determination of any applications for review of the Electoral Commissioner's decision on the registration of a how-to-vote card.

Section 82A of the *Electoral Act 2002* provides that VCAT has until 5 pm the next working day after receiving the application to determine the application or give directions on any changes required to obtain registration.

Supreme Court

Under section 176 of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC or a candidate may seek an injunction to prevent a person from committing any offence which might apply to elections.

Election service management

The VEC will plan with the Supreme Court to ensure any applications for an injunction received on election day can be prioritised and heard without delay.

Evaluation and reporting

Following the Narracan District supplementary election, an evaluation will be conducted to identify successes, capture lessons learned, and identify performance improvement opportunities through an established continuous improvement framework. The VEC will collect and analyse a range of qualitative and quantitative datasets to support its findings.

Informal ballot paper analysis

Given the timing of the of the Narracan District supplementary election in relation to the 2022 State election, the VEC will conduct a survey of informal ballot papers in the second quarter of 2023. The aim of the survey is to measure the incidence of various types of informal voting, and to contribute to Australia-wide literature on this subject.

Cost management

A Cost Management Strategy for election programs enables timely and accurate forecasting across the election program to embed probity, accountability and transparency on all costs incurred in delivering the election. Details of election costs are included in the Report to Parliament.

Resource management and sustainability

The VEC is committed to managing resources in a way that minimises environmental impact across its operations.

Examples include:

- extending the provision of re-use and recycling facilities currently at VEC head office to all election venues
- encouraging recycling of how-to-vote cards and other materials by providing clearly labelled recycling bins at voting centres and other election venues
- careful consideration and planning of more environmentally sustainable transportation for election materials across the State
- paper reduction strategies such as reducing the amount of paper sent to election offices for election use, moving instruction manuals to an online format, and the provision of electronic copies of reports where possible

The VEC values and promotes knowledge, learning and collaboration. It actively works to empower and engage staff and the community in decisions of importance to all and will continue to promote sustainable practices during a District supplementary election.

Enrolment and close of rolls

Overview

Under a joint roll arrangement, the State and Commonwealth share responsibility for maintaining enrolment in Victoria. Both the VEC and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) have programs in place to assist people to enrol and update their enrolment details. Additionally, enrolment applications processed by the AEC are provided to the VEC at least weekly, to ensure currency of the Victorian register of electors.

Enrolment eligibility checks

Nominations open the day following the issue of the writ. The VEC will check that nominating candidates are enrolled on the Victorian register of electors and that their nominators (where applicable) are enrolled in the electorate in which the candidate is nominating.

Electoral roll

Section 72(4)(a) of the *Electoral Act 2002* states a District supplementary election must be held on the electoral roll that was prepared for the purpose of the election that has failed.

Election roll products

Registered Political Party rolls, and independent candidate rolls for Narracan District, will also be generated and provided upon request. Registered Political Parties and candidates can only use roll data for limited purposes. Registered Political Parties and candidates will be reminded of their legislative obligations and the significant penalties for the misuse of roll data.

Communication and engagement

Information services

Public enquiry service

A VEC call centre will be established to deal with the increased volume of calls and emails received during a District supplementary election through a public enquiry service.

The operation period for the call centre will be as follows:

Date	Operating Hours
Weekdays Monday 19 December to Friday 13 January	8.30 am to 5 pm
Weekdays Monday 16 January to Friday 27 January	8.30 am to 6 pm
Tuesday 17 January	8.30 am to 8 pm
Thursday 19 January	8.30 am to 8 pm
Saturday 21 January	9 am to 5 pm
Wednesday 25 January (extended hours)	8.30 am to 8 pm
Thursday 26 January	9 am to 5 pm
Saturday 28 January	8 am to 6 pm
Monday 30 to Tuesday 31 January	8.30 am to 5 pm

Outside VEC hours of operation, a recorded service will provide information on enrolment and voting.

Multi-language telephone interpreting service

An existing telephone multi-language information service will be available. Voters will be able to request an interpreter if they wish. The VEC provides 20 dedicated telephone numbers for the most widely spoken languages in Victoria. See Appendix 1.

info@vec.vic.gov.au

People who prefer to engage with the VEC online will be presented with a wide range of online help topics and videos through the VEC website. If these options do not successfully address their enquiry people can email the VEC using the address info@vec.vic.gov.au. The VEC's public enquiry service will address and respond to emails sent to info@vec.vic.gov.au

Digital services

VoterAlert notification service

The VEC offers an electronic notification service – VoterAlert – by email and/or SMS.

Those electors registered for VoterAlert will receive voting reminders during the election.

Website

The VEC website will feature comprehensive the Narracan District supplementary election -specific information, updated at each phase of the election cycle. Information will include:

- registering to work at the election
- nominating and how-to-vote cards
- early, postal voting, telephone-assisted, interstate and overseas options
- details of how, when, and where to vote on election day

- information on vote counting in a District supplementary election
- Election related publications and explanatory videos to assist voters with common election questions will be available on the website
- election results.

Key information will also be available in Easy English.

From 6 pm on election night provisional results information will become available on the VEC website. Results will continue to be updated after election night as postal votes continue to arrive before the close of the postal vote receipt period, and if a preference distribution is conducted.

Voting centre locator

The VEC's voting centre locator is an interactive map searchable by address, street name and locality and will provide detailed voting centre, early voting centre and election office information. The voting centre locator is available via the VEC website and can be used via most mobile phones. The voting centre locator will show voting centres nearest to any search result and will provide information about the facilities at the voting centres, including wheelchair accessibility.

Advertising

The VEC will run print advertisements through the election period to convey key electoral information to electors and other key stakeholders.

Media

Media releases

A number of media releases will provide journalists and media outlets across Narracan District with key election information for their publications and can

refer to; enrolment, nomination and voting information, key dates, facts and figures, and results publication information.

Social media

The VEC will use social media platforms to provide key election updates and continue to establish itself as an authoritative and trusted source of truth for all election-related enquiries. This will include proactively promoting key messages regarding the election using rich media such as gifs, videos and infographics – as well as responding in a timely and accurate manner to an anticipated high volume of queries received from users.

Similarly, the VEC will monitor emerging issues that arise via social media.

Education and inclusion services

The VEC is committed to delivering safe and inclusive election services that enable all Victorians to participate in democracy. The VEC offers extensive education and inclusion services year-round to support the broad diversity of eligible Victorians.

Outreach sessions for priority communities are available on request.

Inclusion of people with disabilities

The VEC's existing services for people with disabilities include but are not limited to braille ballot papers; telephone-assisted voting; and wheelchair accessible voting centres. Further, a number of accessibility aids and tools are available for use at voting centres. The VEC will aim to further enhance the support provided to people with disabilities to vote.

Venue and resource management

electronic mark-off purposes.

Election Infrastructure Location Strategy

The Election Infrastructure Location Strategy (EILS) sets out the VEC's strategic direction in adopting election infrastructure solutions for election events.

Certain guiding principles were determined:

1. Election Offices remain the centre for the administrative oversight of the delivery of the election in each district
2. Early Voting Centres (EVCs) will take the majority of votes and should be located in areas of high voter traffic to maximise the accessibility to the electorate
3. Election Day Voting Centres will be retained, though numbers and staffing will reduce as early voting rises in popularity

All election venues are audited for accessibility and the VEC is committed to ensuring that there is at least one fully accessible voting centre or early voting centre that can provide maximum access to voters. All accessibility ratings for all venues will be included on the VEC website.

Voting centre equipment

The VEC will arrange for the delivery of furniture (where required) and equipment to each voting centre ahead of voting activities.

This will include customised cardboard voting centre equipment (voting screens, directional signage, ballot boxes, recycling rubbish bins etc.).

All voting centres will be provided with at least one device to allow officials to access an electronic copy of the State roll for

Election office management

The VEC will establish an election office in Narracan District for the District supplementary election.

Once established and open to the public, the election office will be clearly identified with signage and will have appropriate security.

The election office provides facilities for the Election Manager to meet with candidates and/or their representatives and provides a counter service to members of the public.

The election office will be supplied with all equipment, stationery, and materials necessary for the conduct of the election.

The Election Manager will have access from the election office to the VEC's election management system, an IT application specifically developed to support the conduct of the election. Nominations and results for the Narracan District supplementary election will be entered directly into the application.

The VEC will arrange the collection of materials and equipment from all election offices once all election services have been successfully delivered.

Public office hours

The Narracan election office will open to the public following the issue of the writ.

The standard hours of operation for the election office will be as follows:

Date	Operating Hours
Weekdays Tuesday 20 December to Friday 27 January	9 am to 5 pm
Saturday 28 January Election day (Public enquiries only)	8 am to 6 pm

The election office will be closed to the public between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, and open to candidate nominations by appointment only.

Senior Election Officials

Election Managers and Assistant Election Managers

The Electoral Commissioner appoints an Election Manager for the Narracan District supplementary election. The VEC may appoint one or more Assistant Election Managers to support the Election Manager in delivering the election.

By the time of appointment, Election Managers and Assistant Election Managers will have undergone extensive training comprising online and face-to-face training and associated home study activities. The training includes significant practical components and covers all aspects of the role.

The Election Manager will appoint and train an optimum number of staff to ensure the efficient conduct of their election. These will include staff to work in the election office, in early voting centres and in election day voting centres.

Support for the Narracan election manager

Election Support Officer

An Election Support Officer will provide support to the Election Manager throughout the election. The Election Support Officer will be the central point of contact between the Election Manager, the Electoral Commissioner and other VEC head office staff.

The Election Support Officer will assist the Election Manager with procedural and operational issues. The Election Support Officer will visit the election office to provide in-person checks on election progress and be available for further visits to support the Election Manager as required.

Election Liaison Officers

The Election Manager will appoint a minimum of two Election Liaison Officers who will visit voting centres on election day. The Election Liaison Officers' role will be to alert the Election Manager to instances where voting centres may need extra resources and deliver them where appropriate, and to ensure procedures are applied consistently. Help Desk

VEC Help Desk

The VEC will establish a Help Desk to provide frontline support to the election office and other voting centres. The Help Desk undertakes quality assurance checks of the VEC's IT infrastructure prior to the opening of the election office and provides system support to users of the VEC's election management system. The Help Desk also forwards any procedural questions to the Election Support Officer.

Personnel helpline

The personnel helpline provides telephone and email support to election staff in the use of the VEC's personnel systems, and assists them to:

- complete their online registration for appointment (potential new staff)
- understand the political disclosure requirements
- complete online training
- access and navigate the election staff self-service portal to update contact details, enter banking, tax and superannuation details, access pay advices and accept any offers of appointment
- complete timesheets and
- resolve pay-related queries.

Candidates and parties

Nominations

Nominations will open following the issue of the writ. The VEC will produce information for prospective candidates including candidate and scrutineer handbooks and all forms required for nominating at the election. All candidate information will be available on the VEC website and from the Election Manager.

Nominations from Registered Political Parties must be lodged at the VEC head office. The Election Manager will receive and record nominations from independent candidates, including the receipt of the \$350 nomination deposit.

Independent candidates will be able to complete their nomination form online via Candidate Helper on the VEC website but will also still need to lodge their hard copy nomination form with the Election Manager, as required by legislation.

Nomination information captured electronically will be uploaded into the VEC election management system and will be checked against the signed, hardcopy nomination forms.

Each day during the nomination period the Election Manager will publish, in a prominent position in the election office, a list of all nominations received. Details of nominations that have completed a full quality assurance process will be published on the VEC website daily.

An overview of the nominations period for the Narracan District supplementary election is provided in the table below:

Date & Opening hours	Nominations	Location
20-23 December 2022 9 am - 12 noon	All nominations	Head office for RPPs and Election Office for independent candidates
28-30 December 2022 9 am - 5 pm	Appointments only for 2023	Public Enquiry Service operation only Telephone only
3 -11 January 2023 9 am - 5 pm	All nominations	Head office for RPPs and Election Office for independent candidates
Thursday 12 January 2023 9 am – 12 pm	Close of nominations for Registered Political Parties	Head Office
Friday 13 January 2023 9 am – 12 noon	Close of Nominations for Independent Candidates	Election Office

Draw for position on ballot paper

Following the close of nominations, the Election Manager will hold an electronic ballot draw to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot paper by a single random draw.

How-to-vote cards

All how-to-vote cards (HTVCs) to be distributed within 400 metres of voting centres on election day, or to be carried by mobile voting teams, must be registered by the Electoral Commissioner.

Independent candidates and others may lodge their HTVCs with the Election Manager who will forward these to the Electoral Commissioner for registration. Registered Political Parties must lodge their HTVCs directly with the VEC's head office. The first day for submission of HTVCs to the VEC for

Candidates and parties

registration will be the first Monday following the close of nominations.

Applicants will be required to submit an electronic copy of each card, as well as 2 hard copies. The provision of electronic copies will speed up the process of publishing all registered cards on the VEC website.

Detailed information on the requirements for HTVC card registration will be contained in the candidate handbook.

Candidate enquiries

The Election Manager will personally deal with all enquiries from candidates to ensure that timely, accurate and consistent information is being provided. Registered Political Parties will deal directly with the VEC.

Refund of nomination deposits

Candidates who are eligible will have their nomination deposit refunded as soon as practicable after the declaration of the election.

Nomination deposits for independent candidates will be refunded to the candidate. Nomination deposits for candidates endorsed by a Registered Political Party will be refunded directly to the party. Refunds will be made by direct credit into a nominated bank account or, where requested, by cheque.

All other candidates forfeit their deposits.

Funding and disclosure

Funding

The *Electoral Act 2002* provides registered political parties and independent candidates with access to public money to cover particular expenses.

Public funding is for electoral and political expenditure in relation to the election. To be eligible for public funding, the candidate must achieve at least 4% of first preference votes or be elected, and the candidate or party must lodge an audited statement detailing their expenditure for the supplementary election within 20 weeks after the supplementary election.

After the election results are returned the VEC will reconcile payment amounts, including advance payments, against the first preference votes recorded and statement of expenditure to determine any public funding amounts due to be paid to or recovered from parties and candidates.

Funding amounts are adjusted for inflation each year. For the 2022-2023 financial year, the maximum funding entitlement is

- \$6.49 per first preference vote for the Legislative Assembly.

Administrative expenditure funding is payable to independent elected members and registered political parties with elected members. It can be used to cover the general running costs of the office of a party or an independent member of Parliament.

Policy development funding is public money used to reimburse eligible registered political parties for costs relating to policy development.

The VEC's Funding, Disclosures and Parties team will communicate entitlement obligations and amounts to eligible candidates and parties after the election.

Donation disclosure

Victorian law requires donors and recipients of political donations to declare donations that meet or exceed the disclosure threshold (\$1,080 for the 2022-23 financial year). A donor must be an Australian citizen, an Australian resident or a company with an Australian Business Number.

Recipients must confirm any donation received is from an authorised donor. Disclosures must be made through the VEC within 21 days of the donation via disclosures.vec.vic.gov.au.

Recipients of political donations have a legal obligation to notify donors of their requirement to disclose their donation. Failure to properly disclose a political donation is an offence against the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Prohibited donation activity

Anonymous political donations above the disclosure threshold (\$1,080 for the 2022-23 financial year) and political donations from a foreign source are banned.

There is a general cap on political donations that can be given to any single recipient by the same donor across a four-year election period (the period in between State general elections). For the 2022-23 financial year, the general cap is \$4,320. Any political donations that exceed the general cap, including aggregated donations, are prohibited. While a small contribution, as defined by the *Electoral Act 2002*, does not contribute to the general cap, small contributions cannot be used as a way of evading donation disclosure and reporting obligations.

Compliance and enforcement

The VEC's dedicated Electoral Compliance team uses a range of intelligence and investigation techniques to monitor and enforce compliance with Victoria's donation disclosure and reporting laws.

Funding and disclosure

This includes analysis and reconciliation of annual returns provided by reporting entities, complaints and tip-offs, and ongoing monitoring donation activity within VEC Disclosures.

The VEC routinely works with a range of integrity and law enforcement agencies, and actively partners with other agencies to exchange intelligence and share information.

Further information

Further information regarding Victoria's funding and disclosure laws is available on the VEC website.

Ballot material

VEC employees will supervise all stages of the preparation and printing of ballot material and roll products.

Ballot papers

Artwork for ballot papers will be generated using the VEC's automation tool, which creates each product dynamically, based on nominations. The tool imports relevant candidate information into the products directly from the election management system's database.

In line with legislation, ballot papers will include Registered Political Party logos where registered. Logos will appear next to party candidate names on district ballot papers.

Mail house ballot paper stock to be used for postal voting will be pre-printed with the initials of the VEC officer responsible for postal voting.

Print ready PDF files will be securely transmitted directly to the VEC's contracted ballot material printer, therefore requiring minimal work by the printer prior to production.

Braille ballot papers

Electors who are blind or have low vision can register to receive braille ballot material. An initial mail-out by Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia will be undertaken to ensure that all voters for the Narracan District supplementary election who are blind or have low vision are provided with accessible information for the upcoming State election.

Ballot paper tracking and security

Physical security and integrity are critical aspects of the VEC's election design. Election materials such as ballot papers and certified copies of the electoral roll, both paper and electronic, are strictly controlled.

Pre-election day voting

Early voting

Electors can vote during the two weeks before election day at an early voting centre within the district a District supplementary election is being held.

The VEC will work to ensure that early voting centres are well located within the district and provide ease of access, whilst at the same time ensuring early voter queuing times are kept to a minimum as much as possible.

The standard hours of operation for early voting will be as follows:

Date	Operating Hours
Monday 16 January	9 am to 6 pm
Tuesday 17 January	8.30 am to 8 pm
Thursday 19 January	8.30 am to 8 pm
Saturday 21 January	9 am to 5 pm
Wednesday 25 January	8.30 am to 8 pm
Thursday 26 January	9 am to 5 pm
All remaining weekdays	8.30 am to 6 pm

Staff at early voting centres will be provided with electronic roll mark off facilities.

Postal voting

Electors may apply online for a postal vote. They do not need to sign the postal vote application, or have it witnessed; however, they will be required to provide verification information by way of a verification question and answer when completing their postal vote.

Hardcopy application forms will also be available from Australia Post offices, the VEC head office and the election office from Wednesday 21 December. In special circumstances, electors will also be able to receive emailed ballot material - see Interstate and Overseas Voting for more information.

Electors registered as general postal voters for State elections will have their ballot material posted to them as soon as it becomes available following the close of nominations.

Postal votes will be returned to the VEC head office for processing. They will be delivered to the election office for extraction and counting activities.

Mobile voting

Subject to COVID-19 guidance, the Electoral Commissioner may appoint nursing homes, homelessness support agencies, Aboriginal community locations, and other institutions as mobile voting centres at the election.

Mobile voting teams will visit these facilities during the early voting period to enable electors that are unable to attend an early or election day voting centre to vote. To reduce risk, the VEC will encourage postal vote applications or telephone assisted voting (electors who are unable to vote without assistance because they are blind; have low vision or a motor impairment) from these venues.

The Election Manager will contact facilities within the district in advance to establish a visitation schedule. Registered Political Parties and candidates will be advised of mobile voting itineraries.

Telephone assisted voting

The VEC will provide telephone assisted voting services to electors who are unable to vote without assistance because they are blind; have low vision or a motor impairment.

Pre-election day voting

Telephone assisted voting entails a two-step process and electors are required to make two telephone calls. The first call is to register for a telephone assisted vote and the second is to cast their vote.

The service will operate from the opening of early voting. Registration will close at 6 pm on Friday 27 January. Voters that are still in the phone queue at 6 pm will be allowed to vote, as if they were physically at a voting centre.

Interstate and overseas voting

The VEC will identify the volume of eligible electors for the Narracan District supplementary election outside of Victoria during the election period.

For the Narracan District supplementary election, ballot papers will be available to eligible electors outside of Victoria during the election period through secure email or post. Electors can then return their ballot by post ensuring the returned ballot is postmarked before the close of voting at 6 pm on election day.

Electors applying outside the state of Victoria will be offered an express-post delivery option for both dispatch and return of their completed ballot paper.

Election day voting centres

Operation of voting centres

A Voting Centre Manager will be appointed to manage each voting centre operating on Election Day. Voting Centre Managers will be trained in the strict legal requirement to adhere to the procedures for operation of the voting centre. This includes the requirements around the display of signage outside voting centres.

Voting centre staff

The VEC's online registration system for prospective election officials is available on the VEC's website. The Election Manager will appoint the optimum number of staff for each voting centre to provide a smooth flow of electors on election day and will ensure voting centres are resourced and that election tasks are completed as required.

The VEC has developed job specifications to assess potential candidates and ensure that Equal Employment Opportunity principles are followed in the selection of all staff.

Election day staff will be provided with training tools that outline voting centre procedures, with special emphasis on integrity, accuracy, and quality customer service. Election officials in certain roles will be required to complete a suite of online training modules prior to election day, allowing the election manager to monitor the progress and proficiency of all staff. The online training is to complement the face-to-face training sessions for Voting Centre Managers and Election Liaison Officers.

Queue management

Queues both inside and outside of the voting centre will be managed to ensure electors move as quickly as possible through the voting centre to cast their vote.

A queue controller will also ensure that any elector in the queue at the close of voting is able to vote and will ensure that no further persons join the queue after 6 pm.

If a disturbance occurs either within the voting centre or outside the premises, staff are trained in the steps to be taken to diffuse and resolve the situation as required.

Additional voting centre services

The following will be provided at each early and election day voting centre and where practicable also at mobile voting centres:

Multi-language instructions

Voting instructions in a minimum of 19 languages, plus English, will be pre-printed on voting compartments at voting centres. A list of the languages included appears in Appendix 2.

Accessibility aids and tools

A number of tools and aids are provided to assist electors to vote. These include:

- large magnifying sheets at each voting centre
- maxi pencils to allow certain electors to more easily grip the pencil
- assisted hearing devices at early voting centres
- wheelchair or desktop voting compartments

It is the VEC's intent to provide an accessible experience for as many electors as possible.

QR Code for how-to-vote cards

Following the successful deployment at the 2022 State election, mobile voting teams will be provided with a QR Code that directs voters to registered how to vote cards for the Narracan District supplementary election.

Counting the votes

An overview of the counting processes for the Narracan District supplementary election is provided below.

Counting methods

The counting method that applies for the Narracan District supplementary election is preferential counting. All counting will be conducted manually unless large candidate numbers warrant a computerised recheck and preference distribution.

Vote counting

Progressive results information will be provided as it becomes available and will include:

- First preference results
- Two-candidate-preferred (2CP) results
- Recheck results
- Preference distribution results (if required)
- Two-party-preferred (2PP) results (if required)
- the names of elected members

Election day

Early extraction and sort

Legislation allows for the early extraction and sort of postal and early votes on election day. This activity must take place within a restricted area with tight controls in place. Restricted areas will be established at each location where the extraction and sorting activities will occur. Scrutineers and staff will not be able to take recording devices into the restricted area. Check-in facilities will be made available at each venue. Further

information will be provided at briefing sessions prior to the activities commencing.

The extraction and sort of postal votes will take place at VEC head office at 530 Collins Street and will commence after 8 am on election day.

A subsequent extraction will occur at the close of the extended postal voting return period.

Counting

After the close of voting at 6 pm, ordinary votes issued in election day voting centres will be counted in election day voting centres.

Two counts will be conducted in strict order as follows:

1. First preference count – district
2. Two-candidate-preferred count – district

The two-candidate-preferred (2CP) count involves preferences being distributed to the two candidates considered ‘most likely’ to be in the lead after the distribution of preferences. The VEC will make this determination prior to election day. The purpose of the 2CP count is to provide an early indication of the result of the election and information for candidates, Registered Political Parties and analysts.

Counting of postal votes received and verified up to the close of voting on the Friday before election day will commence at 6 pm at the VEC head office (first preference and 2CP).

Further counting will occur once the final postal votes have been received following the close of the extended postal voting return period.

Provisional vote checking

Checking of the enrolment entitlement for voters completing an ‘Application for Enrolment/Provisional Vote’ will take place

Counting the votes

during the week after election day. Enrolment entitlement must be checked before any of these votes can be admitted to the count.

Information from the applications from provisional votes taken in voting centres on election day and at early voting centres prior to election day will be sent to VEC head office for processing

A thorough check of enrolment entitlement will be conducted for each provisional vote. This will include a search of the enrolment register to check that the elector had not previously been removed from the register of electors on the grounds that they were no longer eligible. A check will also be made to determine if citizenship or British subject status has previously been confirmed for the voter, and that the address for which enrolment is claimed is a valid address for enrolment purposes.

As a result of these checks, a decision will be made to either admit the vote to the count or exclude it. VEC head office will complete the extraction and counting of these votes. The enrolment register will also be updated from provisional votes where required.

Counting after election day

District rechecks and preference distributions

A district primary count will be rechecked after election day. The data entry of ballot paper preferences may be used to replace the manual recheck process in the event of high candidate numbers and no candidate is likely to receive an absolute majority of first preference votes.

A preference distribution to determine the result of an election will be required if no candidate obtains an absolute majority (more than 50%) of the first preference votes. Preference distributions will take place after all rechecking has been completed and the last date for admission of postal votes to the count has passed.

Recount

A recount of votes can take place before a candidate is declared elected. A recount may be conducted:

- at the Election Manager's discretion following approval from the Electoral Commissioner, or
- at the request of a candidate, specifying reasons, and the Electoral Commissioner agrees to the request, or
- if the Election Manager is directed by the VEC to conduct one.

The VEC head office will monitor the outcome of the election and work with the Election Manager to determine if a recount should take place.

If so, the *Electoral Act 2002* requires the VEC to provide at least 4 hours' notice to candidates and political parties relevant to a recount.

Corrected two-candidate-preferred counts

The VEC will not adjust any incorrect 2CP on election night or during recheck procedures.

District two-party-preferred counts

The purpose of the two-party-preferred vote is to show how the vote is divided among the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and the Liberal Party and The Nationals, taking into account the preferences of people who vote for minor parties and independents.

The VEC will conduct two-party-preferred counts if required once all counting has been completed.

Availability of election results

The VEC will provide downloadable result data files for the District supplementary election in a form that can be readily used by TV and print media.

Counting the votes

Results will also be published at regular intervals on the VEC website. The results will include information on candidates, party affiliation (where applicable) and voting locations. The result will be set in ballot paper position order and will contain the total number of votes received by each candidate for the district count.

Declaration of the result

The Election manager is required to publicly declare the election and to announce the name of the candidate elected.

The Election will be declared as soon as possible once the result has been determined and the VEC has confirmed that no residual counting activity could possibly change the successful candidate. Candidates will be advised of the date, time and location of the declaration.

The election must be declared before the return of the writ.

Compulsory voting enforcement

Section 163 of the *Electoral Act 2002* determines that the VEC must, within six months of election day, send by post to each elector who appears not to have voted a notice asking why they did not vote.

The non-voter enforcement process will take place in 4 stages. The first 3 stages will be conducted by the VEC, with the final enforcement stage managed by Fines Victoria.

Apparent failure-to-vote notice

As required under the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC will prepare and send an apparent failure-to-vote notice to all voters who appear to have failed to vote in the Narracan District supplementary election and are not automatically exempt.

Infringement notice

The *Infringements Act 2006* sets out the steps to be followed at the infringement notice stage of enforcement.

The VEC will prepare and send an infringement notice to any apparent non-voter whose excuse is not considered valid and sufficient, and those who failed to respond to the apparent failure-to-vote notice. A penalty applies to this infringement notice. Non-voters must either pay the penalty in full by the due date or they may seek a payment plan.

During the infringement notice stage, non-voters may seek a review of the infringement. A request for a review may result in the infringement being withdrawn. A 'Withdrawal of Infringement' notice will be sent to each non-voter who has their infringement withdrawn at this stage.

During the infringement stage non-voters may request to have their infringement heard in the Magistrates' Court.

Penalty reminder notice

The VEC will prepare and send a penalty reminder notice to those apparent non-voters who, at the conclusion of the infringement notice stage have not paid the penalty for failing to vote. The original penalty and a penalty reminder notice fee applies to this notice. Non-voters continue to have the same review and hearing options available as at the infringement notice stage.

Lodgement with Magistrates' Court and Fines Victoria

At the end of the enforcement program, the VEC will commence proceedings against any non-voter that elected to have their matter heard in the Magistrates' Court.

The VEC will also collate all outstanding infringements and prepare and lodge a final court file with Fines Victoria within the prescribed timeframe.

Receipt of penalties

The VEC will receive and record all payments made in relation to compulsory voting enforcement. At the conclusion of the enforcement program, all penalty payments collected for the Narracan District supplementary election will be transferred to consolidated revenue.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Election timeline

COUNTDOWN			
MON	19 DEC	40	ISSUE OF WRIT
TUES	20 DEC	39	Nominations open (9 am – 12 noon only)
WED	21 DEC	38	(9 am – 12 noon only)
THURS	22 DEC	37	(9 am – 12 noon only)
FRI	23 DEC	36	(9 am – 12 noon only)
MON	26 DEC	33	PUBLIC HOLIDAY - BOXING DAY
TUES	27 DEC	32	PUBLIC HOLIDAY - CHRISTMAS DAY OBSERVED
WED	28 DEC	31	OFFICE CLOSED TO PUBLIC – taking nomination appointment requests only
THUR	29 DEC	30	OFFICE CLOSED TO PUBLIC – taking nomination appointment requests only
FRI	30 DEC	29	OFFICE CLOSED TO PUBLIC – taking nomination appointment requests only
SAT	31 DEC	28	
SUN	1 JAN	27	
MON	2 JAN	26	PUBLIC HOLIDAY – NEW YEARS DAY OBSERVED
TUES	3 JAN	25	
TUE	10 JAN	18	
WED	11 JAN	17	
THU	12 JAN	16	Close of RPP nominations at 12 noon
FRI	13 JAN	15	Close of independent nominations with EM at 12 noon Ballot draw commences at 1 pm
SAT	14 JAN	14	
SUN	15 JAN	13	
MON	16 JAN	12	First day for submission of HTVCs to Commission for registration Early voting commences at 9 am Mobile voting may commence from 9 am
TUE	17 JAN	11	Late night early voting until 8 pm
WED	18 JAN	10	
THU	19 JAN	9	Close of submission of HTVCs to Commission for registration at 12 noon Late night early voting until 8 pm
FRI	20 JAN	8	Close of HTVC correction period at 12 noon
SAT	21 JAN	7	Early voting from 9 am – 5 pm
SUN	22 JAN	6	
MON	23 JAN	5	
TUE	24 JAN	4	
WED	25 JAN	3	Close of submission of postal vote applications at 6 pm Late night early voting until 8 pm
THU	26 JAN	2	
FRI	27 JAN	1	Close of early voting at 6 pm
SAT	28 JAN	0	ELECTION DAY
FRI	3 FEB	6	Last day postal votes can be admitted to count (6 pm)
SAT	18 FEB	21	RETURN OF WRIT (on or before this day)

RPPs = Registered Political Parties; EM = Election Manager; HTVCs = How-to-vote Cards

Appendix 2: Community languages

The VEC currently provides translated information and operates interpreter telephone lines in the community languages listed below (plus one for “all other languages”).

Language	Telephone
Amharic (African language)	9209 0190
Arabic	9209 0100
Bosnian	9209 0191
Chinese (Cantonese)	9209 0101
Chinese (Mandarin)	9209 0106
Croatian	9209 0102
Dari	9209 0193
Dinka	9209 0119
Greek	9209 0103
Italian	9209 0104
Khmer	9209 0112
Korean	9209 0194
Macedonian	9209 0105
Persian	9209 0195
Russian	9209 0196
Serbian	9209 0107
Somali (African language)	9209 0108
Spanish	9209 0109
Turkish	9209 0110
Vietnamese	9209 0111
All other non-English languages	9209 0112

