2022 State election
Service plan

August 2022

VEC Victorian Electoral Commission

Victorian Electoral Commission

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

Foreword

On 26 November 2022, over 4.3 million eligible Victorians will be required to cast their vote to elect the 60th Victorian Parliament. The Victorian State election is a significant democratic event where electors will make decisions about who represents them in 88 Legislative Assembly districts and 8 Legislative Council regions.

As the responsible agency, the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) will manage every element of the election under a strict statutory regime, requiring forward planning, strong project management, attention to detail and discipline. Further, this State election will consume considerable financial, logistical, human and administrative resources, and the VEC must exercise fiscal responsibility without compromising integrity or service delivery standards. This will be managed with due consideration given to growth in the population of about 230,000 electors since 2018, and the need to expand election services accordingly. Also, the redrawing of the State's electoral boundaries in October 2021 will result in a transfer of 910,384 electors (21.28% of all Victorian electors) to a different electoral district.

As expected in such a high-profile public event, 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, 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 extent and impact of COVID-19 in the community at the end of 2022 is far from clear 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 2022 State 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.

Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

Contents

Contents

Background and purpose

Introduction

An event the size of a State election requires considerable planning, and extensive preparation and co-ordination. The voting experience of each elector should be positive and the efforts of the VEC in providing that voting opportunity be largely invisible.

This Election Service Plan (the plan) works to that end. It is a keystone document, directing the VEC's planning and preparation for the 2022 State election and enabling project co-ordination.

The plan also provides all election participants with early advice on how the 2022 State election will be delivered, allowing an opportunity for stakeholders to review the 'game plan' and develop their plans and responses accordingly.

This also extends to the many employees, appointees, contractors and service providers on which the VEC relies. Their understanding of the election and their place and importance in the event is critical to the successful outcome and high quality of service available to electors.

Guiding principles

The 2022 State election will be 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

Victoria has two Houses of Parliament. The Legislative Assembly, or lower house, is made up of 88 seats. and comprises 88 electoral districts; each district is represented by one member for a four-year term. The Legislative Council, or upper house, is made up of 40 seats and comprises 8 regions, each represented by 5 members for a four-year term. Each of the 8 regions comprises 11 districts.

The Victorian State election will be held on Saturday 26 November 2022.

The VEC is responsible for the conduct of all Victorian State elections and by-elections. The VEC's State 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 a State 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 State 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:

- complete all election preparation projects by 30 September 2022

- ensure that as many eligible Victorians as possible are correctly enrolled by the close of roll on Tuesday 8 November 2022

- increase public awareness and knowledge of the election process and the various participation methods

- 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 and participate effectively in the election

- provide electoral information, including results, 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.

Strategic initiatives

The VEC adopts a process of continuous improvement to refine the operational model and supporting frameworks to ensure operational needs are legislatively compliant and align with the VEC's strategic plan.

This work includes consideration for the recommendations made by the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) as part of its Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2018 Victorian State Election and VEC-led performance evaluation and outcomes.

Background and purpose

The VEC's response to EMC recommendations can be found in Appendix 6.

Several new or enhanced initiatives will be implemented for the 2022 State election. These are summarised as follows, further detail is provided later in the document:

- a media literacy campaign, aimed at increasing awareness of election-related misinformation and disinformation campaigns

- an early voting model designed to ensure that electors have easy access to early voting services

- a location strategy used to develop and implement election infrastructure solutions

- improved design, tracking and handling of ballot papers

- improved candidate products and services

- delivery of a digital EasyVote Guide to those registered for the VEC's VoterAlert service

- a broader Democracy Ambassador Program, providing targeted enrolment and education outreach sessions to areas geo-mapped as low participation and high informality

- specific engagement campaigns for directly-enrolled and young electors.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) planning

After the experience of conducting the local government elections during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the VEC is focussed on delivery of a safe, convenient and accessible election program in 2022. 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 to minimise or stop the spread of the disease

- complies with 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.

To complement the 2022 State Election Service Plan, the VEC will publish a COVIDSafe Election Plan that will outline actions and strategies to deliver a safe State election in response to several possible scenarios. This will be undertaken in concert with attention on the VEC's legislative obligations and the integrity of the election.

The VEC recognises it is operating in a dynamic environment. The COVIDSafe Election Plan will be updated as necessary as the environment or advice changes.

Electoral Integrity

The planning, delivery and evaluation of the 2022 State election 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 election offices 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 an 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 purposes of 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 writs, which must be returned by Saturday 17 December 2022. The VEC will calculate and publish the date by which a petition must be filed after the writs are returned.

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 writs 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, as at the close of roll, 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 2022 State Election

Under section 8(2)(b) of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC must report to each house of Parliament within 12 months of the conduct of each election on the administration of that election. For the 2022 State election, the VEC aims to table its report no later than October 2023. The report will include:

- analysis and summary of results and trends

- selected detailed statistics

- acquittal against EMC recommendations

- overview of the planning process

- levels of key stakeholder satisfaction

- 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

- learnings from evaluation surveys and data analysis

- 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.

Redivision of electoral boundaries

The Electoral Boundaries Commission concluded a redivision of the State in October 2021. This was the first redivision of both Houses of Parliament since 2013. As required by legislation, the VEC provided administrative and technical services to the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Appendix 2 provides details of the districts and regions that will apply at the issue of the writs for the State election in November 2022.

Election timeline

The Victorian State election timeline is defined in the *Electoral Act 2002*. Barring exceptional circumstances, State elections are held on the last Saturday in November, every four years.

A State election commences with the issue of the Writs 25 days before election day. The Writs for a State election must be returned no later than 21 days after election day. Therefore, the timeframe for the conduct of a State election is 46 days.

Given this short timeframe, it is essential that planning and preparation commences well in advance of the election. The lead-time for the preparation of a State election is 18 months. All major projects will be in place by Friday 30 September 2022, well in advance of the issue of the writs.

The timeline for the 2022 election, based on the writs being issued on Tuesday 1 November 2022, is included in Appendix 1.

A summary of key milestones during the VEC's election preparation is included in Appendix 3.

Election service management

External service providers

Many aspects of a State 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 2022 State election, the VEC will have service agreements and contracts in place for a range of specialist services, including:

- Australia Post

- ballot paper and ad-hoc 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. The VEC has requested a discreet police presence at voting centres during the hours of voting on election day.

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.

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 2022 State election, an in-depth evaluation will be conducted to identify success against performance measures, capture lessons learned, and identify performance improvement opportunities through an established continuous improvement framework.

During the evaluation, the VEC will collect and analyse a range of data, including feedback from internal and external stakeholders and election participants.

The VEC will engage an independent research company to evaluate stakeholder satisfaction with the delivery of the 2022 State election services. This activity will include selection of Registered Political Parties and candidates will also be surveyed on their satisfaction with the services provided at the election.

Informal ballot paper analysis

Immediately post the election, the VEC will conduct a survey of informal ballot papers. 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 the 2022 State election enables timely and accurate forecasting across the election program to embed probity, accountability and transparency on all costs incurred in delivering the election.

Resource management and sustainability

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

For some time, the VEC has been implementing changes to its practices to be more environmentally sustainable. For the 2020 local government elections, the paper stock used for printing the ballot material was 100% recycled paper with carbon neutral and forest management certified (FSC) credentials and was made locally in Victoria. The VEC intends to use paper from the same source at the 2022 State election.

Other 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 the 2022 State election.

Measuring performance

To measure the overall success of the election and to determine whether the VEC's election delivery objectives have been met, the following key performance indicators have been developed. Data and evidence will be collected throughout the election period, with results summarised in the final Report to Parliament.

Inspired people

Objective 1: Our organisation is inclusive, and reflects the community we serve		
Indicator	**Measure**	**Target**
% of people who completed VEC core values training	% of training completed by assigned staff (EMTs, CTLs, EVCMs, MVCMs, TLs) *	100% of assigned staff

* EMT – Election Management Team
 CTL – Count Team Leader
 EVCM – Early Voting Centre Manager
 MVCM – Mobile Voting Centre Manager
 TL – Team Leader

Objective 2: We have a sustainable workforce that is trained, equipped and supported to deliver the election		
Indicator	**Measure**	**Target**
Number of election officials identified for State election completing online training	Proportion of total	100%
Compliance with established parameters relating to workforce hours and welfare management	Response time between notification and resolution	≥ 90% of reported incidents resolved within 48 hours of report
Staff feel positive about working for the VEC and would re-engage	Employee Satisfaction Survey results ESI = Employee Satisfaction Index	ESI ≥ 80%

Measuring performance

Empowered electors

Objective 3: We engage and support our stakeholders through the electoral process		
Indicator	**Measure**	**Target**
All registered political party (RPP) briefings are successfully conducted by the issue of the Writs	% of RPPs briefed by issue of Writs	100%
Independent candidate briefing successfully delivered	Independent candidate briefing conducted prior to the issue of the Writs	Briefing conducted
Proportion of enrolled voters who are subscribed to VoterAlert	Proportion of total enrolment subscribed to VoterAlert	>55% of total enrolment
Visitors to the website	Number of unique visitors that visit the VEC website between 30 September and 31 December	5% increase in visitors to the VEC website from 2018 (1,996,814 visitors)
Audience reach for social media posts	Reach is made up of the following measures: • how many times @electionsvic was tagged on Twitter • the increase in the number of followers on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram • engagement on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram	Increase audience reach by 20% on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
Elector recall rate of the election advertising campaign	The rate of recall in independent research with voters	88% overall recall
Overall level of voter satisfaction (aggregate across voter types – includes CALD, early, postal, overseas and ordinary/absent voters)	The level of overall satisfaction in independent research with voters	88%
Number of complainants seeking a re-assessment of the outcome of their complaint	Percentage of total complaints	1% or less
Overall candidate satisfaction with election conduct	Percentage of candidates who report they are satisfied with how the election was conducted	70%

Measuring performance

Objective 4: We provide accessible services and proactively support the participation of all electors, particularly those underrepresented in the electoral process		
Indicator	**Measure**	**Target**
Number of Assisted Wheelchair Accessible (AWA) venues*	Proportion of total EVC = early voting centre VC = voting centre	80% (EVC) 40% (VC)
Number of Independent Wheelchair Accessible (IWA) venues*	Proportion of total	25%
Website accessibility	% compliance with WCAG as per VEC accessibility statement	100%
Availability of different voting methods	Total number of ways to vote	7
People attending the Be Heard! Democracy Ambassador sessions	Number of participants	>8,000 (online & face-to-face)
Session participants know how to correctly fill out a ballot paper	Percentage of participants who know how to fill out a ballot paper correctly	>80%
Session participants know they can get assistance to vote	Percentage of people who know they can get assistance to vote	>80%

* The VEC aims for this target but notes it does not own the venues used during the election.

Measuring performance

Smart solutions

Objective 5: Our systems and processes are secure and compliant		
Indicator	**Measure**	**Target**
Number of legislated dates met	Proportion of total	100%
Return of writs by date specified	Date returned	17/12/2022

Objective 6: Our systems and processes enable efficient and timely delivery of election services and results		
Indicator	**Measure**	**Target**
Number of voting centre venues booked and assessed by 1 August 2022	Proportion of total	95%
Number of voting centres fully resourced within 48 hours of operating date	Proportion of total	99%
Number of early voting centres open and ready to operate from Monday 14 November 2022	Proportion of total	100%
Number of electoral district rolls produced and available for distribution within 8 days of roll close (by 16 November 2022)	Proportion of total	100%
Turnaround time for postal vote application processing from Wednesday following close of nominations	Proportion processed on day of receipt	90%
Percentage of Legislative Assembly first preference vote counts received from voting centres within three hours of close of voting	The number of voting centres that had their Legislative Assembly ordinary votes counted and entered into the election management system by 9 pm	85%
Percentage of total Legislative Assembly votes which were counted to first preferences on election weekend	Proportion of total votes for the election, counted on election weekend	75%
Grade of Service for Public Enquiry Service	Proportion of calls answered within a specified time in seconds	90% / 120 seconds
Number of complaints or election enquiries responded to or acknowledged within five working days	Proportion of total	100%
% of social media queries responded to within agreed timeframes	Proportion of total simple queries responded to within 2 hours and complex queries within 5 hours	80%
Successful enactment of procedures for managing in-breach content on social media	Time from notification to resolution ('resolution' being the point at which the user rectifies or takes down their content at the VEC's direct request, or once the VEC has reported the breach to the relevant social media platform)	48 hours
% of matters resolved successfully when the VEC escalates take down requests to social media platforms and within agreed timeframes	Proportion of total	100% of take down requests made to platform within 48 hours
Critical systems must be tested and hardened against cyber security threats	% remediation of Critical and High rated vulnerabilities (detected in security testing)	100%

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.

District and region boundary changes

The register of electors will be updated with the new district and region boundary changes on Wednesday 21 September 2022. New boundaries will be reflected against elector details in 'Check My Enrolment' after this date, as well as other online materials. Communication about the new boundaries will be supported in VoterAlert notifications and via the VEC website.

Pre-election roll products

The final monthly roll products for Registered Political Parties will be produced based on enrolment as at the close of business on Thursday 15 September 2022. The final monthly roll products will be distributed on Wednesday 21 September 2022. This will allow parties to check that endorsed candidates are correctly enrolled. Members of Parliament will also be provided with their final monthly products at this time.

Enrolment eligibility checks

Nominations open from 9 am on Wednesday 2 November 2022, the day following the issue of the writs. 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.

Close of roll

The roll for the election closes at 8 pm on Tuesday 8 November 2022 (7 days after the issue of the writs). All election offices and AEC Divisional Offices will remain open until 8 pm on Tuesday 8 November.

The VEC works closely with the AEC to ensure that enrolment data received by the close of roll is processed by the AEC within 24 hours.

All electors who enrol or update their details in the weeks following the close of roll will be contacted. Where applicable, electors will be advised they may attend a voting centre and complete an 'Application for Enrolment/Provisional Vote'.

Election roll products

Roll product generation for the election will commence as soon as final roll update processing has been completed, to allow printing of scannable and reference rolls and the production of other roll products.

Registered Political Party rolls, and candidate rolls for the electorates in which they have nominated, 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 call centre will be established to deal with the large volume of calls and emails received during a State election.

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

Date	Operating Hours
Weekdays Monday 26 September to Friday 11 November	8.30 am to 5 pm
Tuesday 1 November	Closed due to public holiday
Tuesday 8 November (close of roll)	8.30 am to 8 pm
Weekdays Monday 14 to Friday 25 November	8.30 am to 6 pm
Tuesday 15 November	8.30 am to 8 pm
Thursday 17 November	8.30 am to 8 pm
Saturday 19 November	9 am to 5 pm
Thursday 24 November (extended hours)	8.30 am to 8 pm
Saturday 26 November	8 am to 6 pm
Monday 28 to Tuesday 29 November	8.30 am to 5 pm

Outside the call centre hours of operation, a recorded service will be available that provides information on enrolment and voting.

Multi-language telephone interpreting service

An existing telephone multi-language information service will be available and have in-language pre-recorded election content upfront. 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, but the service can support up to 100 different languages. See Appendix 7.

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. A campaign will be conducted during 2022 targeting those electors who are not currently registered for the service (approximately 50% of those enrolled). Those electors registered for VoterAlert will receive an electronic EasyVote Guide, information relating to electoral boundary changes, and where appropriate, notification for general postal voting status and voting reminders during the election.

Communication and engagement

Website

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

- enrolment options

- registering to work at the election

- nominating, how-to-vote cards and group voting tickets

- early, postal voting and telephone-assisted options

- details of how, when, and where to vote on election day

- voting options for electors who are interstate or overseas

- information on the different methods of vote counting

- a misinformation register to collate and debunk any incorrect or misleading election information

- election results.

The VEC will provide a series of explanatory videos to assist users with common election questions – short instructive pieces on topics such as correct completion of ballot papers, what happens in a voting centre, how preferences are counted, and other key topics.

Key information will also be available in Easy English through an icon on the VEC website's main pages.

Translated information will be available on 19 individual language pages. Translated enrolment forms will also be available on each of these pages, that convert the text to English when printed.

From 6 pm on election night provisional results information will become available on the VEC website. A Legislative Assembly results summary will also be available to provide indicative results based on the two candidate preferred results. Results will continue to be updated after election night as absent votes are processed, postal votes continue to arrive before the close of the postal vote receipt period, and preference distributions are conducted.

The VEC will promote the VEC website as the 'source of truth' for all election information and advice in all campaign collateral and promote digital literacy to combat misinformation.

A number of election-specific publications will also be made available on the site.

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.

The voting centre locator will be available online from Wednesday 2 November 2022.

Information for electors overseas

The VEC will provide information about the State election to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the SmartTraveller website. A link to the VEC's online information about voting options while overseas will also be included.

Advertising

Advertising campaign

A State election advertising campaign will drive broad public awareness about participating in the 2022 State election. The 2022 campaign will focus on communicating safe, convenient and accessible enrolment and voting options for all Victorian electors via a 'paper people' concept.

Media literacy campaign

To combat election-related misinformation and disinformation campaigns, the VEC will be promoting the importance of critical consumption of election-related advertising. The focus of the advertising will be a call to check the veracity of any advertised election information: who is the publisher? Is it a reputable source? Is the information current? Does the content excite or inflame? If in doubt, don't share it. The advertising will direct people to access further information on the VEC website.

Media

Media Briefing

Media representatives will be invited to a media briefing in September 2022. Attendees will be provided an outline of the State election timeline and key activities during the election, as well as information regarding the VEC's advertising and awareness campaigns and outreach activities.

Prior to the election period, a media handbook will be developed and distributed to Victorian metropolitan and regional media and will contain information relevant to the election.

Media releases

A number of media releases will provide journalists and media outlets across Victoria with key election information for their publications such as; enrolment, nomination and voting information, key dates, facts and figures, maps, VEC initiatives, and results

publication timelines. The VEC will also promote election day filming opportunities, the Upper House results calculation and other attendance opportunities via media advisories.

Social media

The VEC will use social media platforms to convey key electoral information 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 through key terms and hashtags.

Education and inclusion services

Extensive education and inclusion services are provided year round to support enrolment and voting across the broad diversity of eligible Victorians. The VEC's education and inclusion programs also form part of the VEC's Disability Access and inclusion Plan 2019-2023, Multicultural Inclusion Plan 2020-2023 and Young People Inclusion Plan 2021-2023. These plans all include election-specific deliverables.

The VEC continues to work closely with a broad range of community stakeholders to ensure programs are relevant, appropriate and informed by community needs and expectations. The VEC regularly distributes its BeHeard newsletter to over 2000 community stakeholders and liaises with members of the following advisory groups: Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG), which represents a number of disability support agencies and individuals with lived experience; Out of Home Advisory Group representing people experiencing homelessness or incarceration; Aboriginal Advisory Group; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Advisory Group; and a Young

Communication and engagement

People Advisory Group (in development). Each of these groups is involved in the design of the VEC's electoral education initiatives.

Below is a summary of the program being offered for the 2022 State election.

Democracy Ambassador program

Due to the success of the VEC's 2018 State election Democracy Ambassador Program, which provided electoral education to over 8,000 participants, the Program will focus on reaching voters in traditionally under-represented communities. The program will include the training and support of a State-wide team of peer leaders to deliver electoral information and enrolment outreach to areas across Victoria identified as having lower levels of electoral participation and higher informality. Furthermore, CALD Democracy Ambassadors will produce in-language informational videos on how to enrol and vote, which will be distributed via social media channels and available online on the VEC's website.

Youth enrolment and voting

A key focus of the 2022 advertising campaign will be the engagement of young people to enrol and vote. The campaign will use digital and social media platforms to engage and inform eligible young Victorians who will be voting for the first time and electors who have been directly-enrolled.

The VEC's Passport to Democracy in-school program will continue to be available, providing students with a positive experience of democracy within their classroom. An additional election-specific module will be available to involve students more closely in the election.

To better support community organisations in providing up-to-date electoral information to their clients or service users, online education resources are being developed.

Services for those experiencing homelessness

Subject to COVID-19 guidelines, the VEC will offer face-to-face outreach enrolment sessions prior to the close of roll to homelessness and crisis accommodation services. In addition, mobile voting will also be offered during the early voting period.

An electoral engagement street-poster campaign targeting areas with high populations of people experiencing homelessness will also be rolled out.

Prisoner engagement

In partnership with Corrections Victoria, information on the election and opportunities to provide voting services will be offered to prisons via the VEC's Electoral Engagement for People in Prisons project.

Engaging Aboriginal communities

In partnership with Reconciliation Victoria, a collaborative project will support the engagement of Aboriginal communities across Victoria and include mobile voting within designated Aboriginal community locations.

Inclusion of people with disabilities

Further to the VEC's existing services for people with disabilities which include, but are not limited to: braille ballot papers; telephone-assisted voting; wheelchair accessible voting centres; and peer-to-peer electoral education sessions, the VEC will be working with disability support workers on a co-design project. This will aim to further enhance the support provided to people with disabilities to enrol and vote.

Venue and resource management

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.

Four 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 staffing will reduce as early voting rises in popularity

4. In metro regions, logistical staging hubs will perform all resourcing and count processes that have previously been done in election offices to drive efficiency

There are a number of realised operational benefits of this strategy including but not limited to the increased number of early voting centres to support the forecasted increase in early voting, reduced wait times for electors, increased scrutiny and control of counting activities, reduced movement of ballot papers and greater support for election staff.

Between late 2021 and early 2022, a review of all voting centres and early voting centres was completed. In selecting these venues, the VEC will consider those venues used at previous State and Federal elections that are geographically well located within each district.

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 in each district that can provide maximum access to voters. All accessibility ratings for all venues will be included on the VEC website and in print media.

Joint voting centres

A number of voting centres will be appointed as joint voting centres due to their proximity to electoral boundaries. Utilisation of joint voting centres assists in the reduction of declaration voting, which is more time consuming for electors and takes more time to process and count after election day. Information regarding joint voting centre locations will be made available along with other voting centres.

Voting centre equipment

The VEC will arrange for the delivery of furniture (where required) and equipment to each voting centre in the three weeks before election day.

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

Each voting centre will be provided with at least one device to allow officials to access an electronic copy of the State roll for look-up purposes. A number of voting centres will also be provided with one or more devices to allow electors' names to be marked directly off an electronic roll. These venues will be determined based on projected number of absent and declaration votes to be cast at each voting centre, based on both historic figures and local knowledge.

Election office management

Senior Election Officials

Recruitment

The VEC undertook a recruitment program for Senior Election Officials from June 2021 to February 2022 to ensure there will be enough coverage of staff for key management roles in all State election areas.

Orientation training

Orientation training for all newly recruited Senior Election Officials and existing Senior Election Officials who have not yet delivered an attendance election was provided, comprising face-to-face seminars and home study (including online) activities.

The orientation training is designed to prepare the Senior Election Officials so that they can effectively join more experienced Senior Election Officials in further training specific to the delivery of the 2022 State election.

Training for Election Managers and Assistant Election Managers

Extensive training for Election Managers and Assistant Election Managers took place during July and August 2022, comprising online and face-to-face training and associated home study activities. An additional 3 days of systems training will take place within election offices in October 2022. The training includes significant practical components and covers all aspects of the role as well as an emphasis on the safe delivery of voting services in a COVID-19 environment.

Topics covered include:

- recruitment and training of staff
- receipt and processing of nominations and how-to-vote cards
- managing voting and assisting voters
- management of ballot papers and
- conducting counts.

The VEC has also appointed a pool of reserve SEOs who have been fully trained and are ready to step into any last-minute management vacancies.

Election offices and staff

Election offices

The VEC will establish an election office for each of the 88 districts. The VEC has a rigorous process for determining suitability, but subject to the market conditions at the time of activity, it is expected that some election offices may need to be in neighbouring districts. Once established and open to the public, all election offices will be clearly identified with signage and will have appropriate security.

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

Six-month leases will be negotiated to enable for IT infrastructure, telecommunication services and utilities to be established well in advance of the election. Election offices will be open to the public from Tuesday 1 November.

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

Election office management

Election offices will access the VEC's election management system, an IT application specifically developed to support the conduct of the election. The election management system contains details of each district and region. Nominations and results are all entered directly into the application.

Additionally, the electoral roll for the election is loaded into the application and is used to mark electors as being issued with a vote. Using the system, the VEC can produce the artwork for printing ballot papers and other products required for the election, and to publish information directly onto the VEC's website.

The VEC will arrange the collection of materials and equipment from all election offices between Monday 19 December 2022 and Friday 27 January 2023.

Public office hours

Election offices will open to the public from Tuesday 1 November and will close on Saturday 26 November 2022.

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

Date	Operating Hours
Weekdays Tuesday 1 November to Friday 25 November	9 am to 5 pm
Tuesday 8 November (Close of roll)	9 am to 8 pm
Saturday 26 November Election day (Public enquires only)	8 am to 6 pm

Election Manager, Assistant Election Manager, and staff

The Electoral Commissioner will appoint 88 Election Managers to conduct elections for the 88 districts. All District Election Managers will accept nominations and how-to-vote cards for registration from independent candidates.

Two region Election Managers will be appointed with overall responsibility for the eight regions, to manage region election officials and oversee the centralised region computer counts. The region election officials will be responsible for the conduct of region rechecks and the movement of below-the-line ballot papers to the computer count centres.

Each Election Manager will be assisted by at least one Assistant Election Manager. 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.

The VEC will work with appropriate partners to encourage and facilitate the appointment of election officials from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those with multi-language skills, young people aged 18-30 years old, and those with a disability.

Support for Election Managers

Election Support Officers

Election Support Officers will provide support to Election Managers throughout the election. Primarily located at either the VEC head office or in district election offices (for larger, remote districts), the Election Support Officers will be the central point of contact between the Election Managers, the Electoral Commissioner and other VEC head office staff.

Election Support Officers will assist Election Managers with procedural and operational

Election office management

issues. Election Support Officers will visit district election offices on a regular basis to provide in-person checks on election progress and be available for further visits to support Election Managers as required.

Election Liaison Officers

Each 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

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

Personnel helpline

The VEC appoints over 15,000 election officials to work at the election. Whilst most will be appointed for election day only, approximately 6,000 election staff are appointed to work at election offices and early voting centres. 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

Registered Political Party briefing sessions

During 2022, the VEC will conduct briefing sessions for Registered Political Parties on the election process, Funding and Disclosure laws and other requirements of the *Electoral Act 2002*. The briefings will provide information on:

- the VEC's preparations for the election

- infrastructure arrangements

- enrolment and roll products

- any changes to legislation

- the role of district and region Election Managers

- postal voting arrangements

- nomination procedures

- the registration of how-to-vote cards and group voting tickets

- the VEC's information campaign and

- the complaints procedure.

Support documentation, including voting centre lists and election office details and data relating to postal voting (where requested) will be made available to Registered Political Parties.

During the election period, the VEC will publish circulars for Registered Political Parties and region candidates. District election managers will keep their district candidates informed of specific election activities and timelines.

Independent candidate information session

An online information session for independent candidates will take place at the VEC on Sunday 30 October at 2 pm. The information session will cover key timelines and procedures relevant to independent candidates.

The information session will also be available online for independent candidates that are not able to attend the in-person session.

Nominations

Nominations open from Wednesday 2 November 2022. The VEC will produce information for prospective candidates including candidate and scrutineer handbooks and all forms required for nominating at the election, as well as information specific to the electorate for which they are nominating. All candidate information will be available on the VEC website and from election managers.

Nominations from Registered Political Parties must be lodged at the VEC head office. Election managers will receive and record nominations from independent candidates, including the receipt of the $350 nomination deposit. Independent candidates that wish to nominate for a region will be able to lodge their nomination with any district election manager within the region in which they are nominating.

A computer application will be made available for Registered Political Parties to complete pre-formatted district and region nomination forms. Parties will be able to forward the forms to preselected candidates for their signature before lodging at the VEC head office.

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 each election manager will publish, in a prominent position in the election office, a list of all district nominations received. Details of nominations that have completed a full quality assurance process, including region nominations, will be published on the VEC website twice daily at approximately 10 am and 6 pm.

Draw for position on ballot paper

Close of nominations for Registered Political Parties will be 12 noon on Thursday 10 November 2022, and for independent candidates, 12 noon on Friday 11 November. district election managers will hold a ballot draw to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot paper as soon as practicable after the close of nominations (anticipated to be from 1 pm on Friday 11 November). One district election manager within each region will have responsibility for conducting the ballot draw for the region. Refer to Appendix 2 for districts responsible for region ballot draws.

Ballot draws will be conducted electronically and the order of names on each district ballot paper is determined by a single random draw.

As per legislation, each region ballot draw will complete the following three draws:

- one to determine the order of groups

- one to determine the order of candidates in a group where this has not been specified by the group

- one to determine the order of any ungrouped candidates.

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 election managers 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 registration will be Monday 14 November, and the final day for submission will be 12 noon on Friday 18 November.

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.

Group registration and group voting tickets

When 2 or more candidates are nominating for a region, they may request that their names be grouped on the ballot paper. Following their registration, each group is entitled to lodge up to 3 group voting tickets. A group voting ticket sets out an order of preferences for all candidates in the region election.

The *Electoral Act 2002* requires that all applications for group registration and group voting tickets be submitted at the VEC. A team of staff will be available at the VEC head office to accept and process applications for group registration and group voting tickets. Group registration will close at 12 noon on Thursday 10 November and group voting tickets must be lodged by 12 noon on Sunday 13 November.

Where groups fail to lodge a group voting ticket, no box will be printed above-the-line on the ballot paper. Penalties apply for groups who do not lodge a group voting ticket by the deadline.

Candidate enquiries

Election managers will personally deal with all enquiries from candidates for their own electorate(s) 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 elected, and candidates for upper house groups who obtain 4% or more of the formal vote, 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.

Nomination deposits will also be refunded if a candidate retires or dies before the close of nominations or is a candidate in a failed election.

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 funding for their electoral and political expenditure in relation to the election. Public funding entitlement amounts are calculated after an election using the number of first preference votes received by the party or candidate. To be eligible for public funding, the party or candidate must lodge an audited statement detailing their expenditure for the election within 20 weeks after the election.

Since 2018, eligible Registered Political Parties and independent candidates have been able to access public funding in advance of the 2022 State election. These parties or candidates must lodge an audited statement of expenditure to show they have correctly acquitted the funding paid since the last election. After the election results are returned the VEC will reconcile payment amounts, including advance payments, against the first preference votes recorded to determine any public funding amounts due to be paid to or recovered from parties and candidates.

Note that funding amounts are adjusted for inflation each year. For the 2022-2023 financial year, the funding entitlement is:

- $6.49 per first preference vote in the Legislative Assembly election, and

- $3.24 per first preference vote in a Legislative Council election.

Other funding streams prescribed by the *Electoral Act 2002*, including administrative expenditure funding and policy development funding, are administered independently from a State 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 and group voting ticket booklets will be generated using the VEC's automation tool, which creates each product dynamically, based on nominations and group voting ticket information. The tool imports relevant candidate and group voting ticket information into the products directly from the election management system's database.

All district ballot papers will be joined to their respective region ballot paper with a perforation between each paper. In addition, the district ballot paper will be rotated 180° to the region ballot paper to prompt the issuing officer to separate the district paper from the region paper when issuing to electors.

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 and above-the-line for each party on region ballot papers. Each district and region ballot paper pair will be colour coded to assist with the extraction and sort of early and postal votes.

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

The VEC works closely with Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia to identify and contact electors who access their services and require election information in an accessible format. The VEC will make election information available to these electors in email, audio, DAISY and braille format.

During September and October 2022, 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 Victorian voters who are blind or have low vision are provided with accessible information for the upcoming State election.

The VEC is not able to provide large print ballot material for the State election due to production timeline constraints.

Absent sets

The VEC will produce absent sets of ballot papers for use during early voting and on election day to ensure electors voting outside their enrolled district can access ballot papers for their own electorate.

Blank district ballot papers

The VEC will prepare sets of printed region ballot papers with adjoining blank district ballot papers, to be used during early and election day voting if fully printed ballot papers are exhausted. Sets will be clearly packaged, and each package will contain 10 joined ballot papers for each of the eight regions (80 ballot papers in total).

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.

Ballot material

The VEC's ballot paper tracking and security policy has been strengthened to further improve its transparency in the management of ballot papers throughout the election.

Performance indicators have been identified to provide the VEC with visibility to enable a timely response to operational issues.

These include:

• the anticipated versus actual consumption rate of printed ballot papers

• the movement and corresponding reconciliation activities to be associated with the distribution of ballot papers and

• the counting and return of ballot papers relevant to activity being undertaken.

Select indicators will also be provided to third party suppliers to report against during the event to alert the VEC of any operational issues in real time.

Group voting ticket booklets

For electors who wish to consider the effect of voting above-the-line, sets of 8 group voting ticket booklets (one booklet per region) will be provided to Election Managers for use in the election office, early voting centres, mobile voting teams and in each election day voting centre. The booklets contain all the group voting tickets registered by each above-the-line group.

Electors will be alerted to the availability of the booklets at each voting centre, and the group voting tickets will also be published on the VEC website.

Pre-election day voting

Early voting

Electors can vote during the two weeks before election day at any early voting centre across the State.

Early voting will be available from Monday 14 November to Friday 25 November within each district. The VEC will establish at least one early voting centre in each district for the 2022 State election. In districts where a high number of early votes are anticipated, two or more early voting centres will be established.

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

It is intended that there will be an increase in the number of early voting centres for the 2022 State election when compared to 2018.

Early voting will operate on weekdays during the early voting period. Additionally, some weekdays have extended hours and early voting is available on the Saturday before election day. This is in recognition of the needs of those members of the community who cannot vote during business hours. The proposed dates and hours of operation are:

Date	Operating Hours
Monday 14 November	9 am to 6 pm
Tuesday 15 November	8.30 am to 8 pm
Thursday 17 November	8.30 am to 8 pm
Saturday 19 November	9 am to 5 pm
Thursday 24 November	8.30 am to 8 pm
All remaining weekdays	8.30 am to 6 pm

Staff at early voting centres will be provided with electronic roll mark off facilities that will provide early voting officials with access to the electoral roll (as at the close of roll).

Postal voting

An elector may apply for a postal vote from the issue of the Writs until 6 pm on Wednesday 23 November. Electors may apply online for a postal vote and if applying online, 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 election offices from Wednesday 2 November. In special circumstances, electors will also be able to receive emailed ballot material - see Central Processing Centre below 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.

Centralised Activity Site (CAS)

The VEC will establish a CAS with responsibility for the processing of postal vote applications, the dispatch of postal ballot material to electors and, the processing of returned postal votes.

Due to new legislation, it is an offence for Registered Political Parties (or any person) to distribute postal vote applications to electors. Only the VEC is exempted with special provision to provide postal vote applications at Australia Post outlets.

For electors unable to access postal voting facilities (travelling interstate or overseas in remote locations with no fixed postal address), the VEC will continue to provide an emailed ballot material solution for accepting

and distributing ballot material. If they meet the criteria, electors apply for a postal vote online and, after indicating they would have difficulty receiving mail, select the email option. Ballot material will be emailed to them at their nominated email address via a secure email dispatch service. Completed ballot papers must be returned by post as there is currently no allowance in legislation for electronic transmission.

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 from these venues.

Election Managers will contact facilities within their district during late October 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.

In the 2022 State election the cohort of eligible electors for telephone assisted voting will be expanded to include those who have tested positive to COVID-19 in the 7 days before the close of voting and those subject to a declared emergency.

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 9 am on Monday 14 November. Registration will close at 6 pm on Saturday 26 November. 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 has previously established early voting facilities at interstate and overseas locations.

For the 2022 State election, in-person voting may not be available at overseas locations due to an inability to access the venues used previously. The VEC will continue to look at options such as postal ballot drop-off.

The VEC will continue to work with interstate electoral commissions to determine the early voting services to be provided.

Details of all locations appointed for the 2022 State election will be available on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au from Friday 11 November 2022.

Antarctic voters

The VEC will continue to work with staff from the Australian Antarctic Division to ensure that Victorian 'Antarctic electors' employed in, or travelling to or from, the Australian Antarctic Territory during the 2022 State election are able to vote.

Election day voting centres

Operation of voting centres

Election day voting centres will operate between 8 am and 6 pm on Saturday 26 November 2022. Voting Centre Managers will be trained in the strict legal requirement to adhere to these times and the procedures for operation of the voting centre on election day. 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. Utilising data regarding staff previously appointed to work at State and local government elections, and persons registering to work for the first time, 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.

The VEC will continue to encourage and engage staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those with disabilities, those who are multilingual and young people (aged 18-30) to register as prospective election officials. Additionally, the VEC will provide opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to apply for employment as election officials.

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 Election Managers 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, Assistant Voting Centre Managers, Declaration Issuing Officers 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 and to ensure voters requiring assistance are provided with appropriate support.

At busy voting centres, staff will be assigned as queue controllers and will have primary responsibility for queue management during busy operating hours. These staff will provide a point of contact for questions and assistance for electors and to ensure they move as quickly as possible to the appropriate own district issuing point, or to the declaration issuing point if voting outside their own district.

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 7.

Election day voting centres

Group voting tickets

Large posters will be provided for each voting centre alerting and directing electors to the Voting Centre Manager, who will have group voting tickets booklets for each region on display and available for inspection.

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 e.g. those with arthritis

- assisted hearing devices at early voting centres

- wheelchair or desktop voting compartments

It is the VEC's intent to provide an accessible experience for all electors to enable them to cast their vote.

Counting the votes

An overview of the counting processes for the 2022 State election is provided below. The appendices to this document include the proposed district and region count schedules.

Counting methods

Different counting methods apply for districts and regions.

These include:

1. Preferential counts – for districts. All primary counts will be conducted manually however some close seat rechecks and preference distributions may be conducted by computer.

2. Proportional representation counts – for regions. All primary and recheck counts will be conducted manually followed by a computerised count and calculation of result.

Vote counting

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

1. District counts: first preference results, two-candidate-preferred (2CP) results, recheck results, preference distribution results (if required), two-party-preferred (2PP) results (if required), and the names of elected members and

2. Region counts: first preference results, recheck results, distribution results, and the names of elected members.

Results will also be aggregated to show State-wide trends for the lower and upper houses.

Election night trial

An election night trial will be conducted on the evening of Wednesday 23 November 2022. The media will be invited to participate to test data feeds. All Election Managers will enter test data into the VEC's election management system to ensure communication and technology systems are performing correctly for the transmission of results to the VEC website and the media. The test data will be entered against the actual candidates for the 2022 State election. All test data will be deleted from the database and website at the completion of the trial.

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 for the 88 districts will take place at the centralised activity site (CAS) from 8 am on election day.

The extraction and sort of early votes will commence from 8 am on election day. These will occur at each early voting centre (other than those used as election day voting centres in the District of Melbourne).

Counting the votes

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.

Three counts will be conducted in strict order as follows:

1. First preference count – district

2. Two-candidate-preferred count – district

3. First preference count – region

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. For the first preference count for the region, voting centre staff will record first preference votes for the region by group (above-the-line and below-the-line) or by ungrouped candidate (below-the-line only).

Counting of district postal votes received and verified up to the close of voting on Friday 25 November will commence at 6 pm on election night at the CAS (first preference and 2CP), with counting continuing until the Saturday following the last day for admission of postal votes to the count on Friday 2 December 2022. First preference counting of region postal votes will take place on Sunday 27 and Monday 28 November and will continue until Monday 5 December.

Counting of own district early votes (first preference and 2CP) will commence at 6 pm on election day in early voting centres. First preference counting for the home electorate region early votes will commence on Monday 28 November.

Early votes taken for other districts will be included in the vote exchange that will take place between Sunday 27 November

and Tuesday 29 November, with the counting of these early votes commencing from Tuesday 29 November at the CAS.

Absent votes (taken in voting centres on election day for other districts) will also be included in the vote exchange, with the counting of these votes commencing from Wednesday 30 November.

Provisional vote checking

Checking of the enrolment entitlement for voters completing an 'Application for Enrolment/Provisional Vote' will take place during the week after election day. Enrolment entitlement must be checked before any of these votes can be admitted to the count.

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 the CAS via the vote exchange. Provisional votes for elections identified by the VEC's close seat management protocol as a 'close seat' will be priority checked.

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. Admitted votes will be passed to the CAS for counting. The enrolment register will also be updated from provisional votes where required.

Counting after election day

District rechecks and preference distributions, and region rechecks

All district primary counts will be rechecked after election day. The data entry of ballot paper preferences may be used to replace the manual recheck process in some districts that are close seats and no candidate is likely to receive an absolute majority of first preference votes. This will allow a computerised preference distribution to take place once all ballot paper preferences have been captured.

Preference distributions to determine the result of an election will be required in districts where 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.

All region primary counts will be rechecked either in election offices for country regions or a hub for metropolitan regions. During the recheck, only above-the-line and informal ballot papers will be rechecked as preferences from below-the-line ballot papers will be double keyed at a computerised counting centre. Any below-the-line ballot papers identified during the recheck will be added to the primary counted below-the-line ballot papers. Region preference distributions

A central computerised counting centre will be established for the conduct of the computerised counts for all regions. Candidates and parties will be advised of the address and access arrangements to the computerised counting centre closer to the commencement of the counts. Only below-the-line ballot papers will be transported to the computerised counting centre for data entry. The above-the-line and informal ballot papers will remain at the respective recheck venue.

Below-the-line ballot papers will be double keyed before the entry of above-the-line and informal vote totals.

Should a region recount be required, above-the-line and informal ballot papers will be transported to the computerised counting centre where a recount will take place.

It is intended that the data entry of below-the-line ballot papers for region elections will commence no later than Monday 5 December at the computerised counting centre. It is estimated that all counts will be completed no later than Tuesday 13 December 2022. The proposed region count timetable is included in Appendix 5.

Recounts

A recount of votes can take place before a candidate is declared elected. Recounts 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 each election and work with Election Managers to determine if recounts 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 any recount.

To note: the VEC has established a recount policy and recount assessment procedures that will inform the steps that may be followed during a recount. The policy also includes details around information that will be provided to affected parties and candidates and the timing of any recount.

Corrected two-candidate-preferred counts

The VEC will monitor the results of the 2CP counts on election night. Where the candidates selected for any district's 2CP count are incorrect, a corrected 2CP count may take place during the week following election day. The VEC will not adjust any incorrect 2CPs on election night.

District two-party-preferred counts

The VEC intends to continue the practice of preparing two-party-preferred statistics for the 2022 State election. The purpose of the two-party-preferred vote is to show, for each district and for the State as a whole, 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, where required, once all counting in each district has been completed. The proposed timeline for the conduct of counts for districts is included in Appendix 4.

Availability of election results

The VEC will provide downloadable result data files for the 2022 State election on its website in a form that can be readily used by TV and print media.

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 location. Each result set will be in ballot paper position order and will contain the total number of votes received by each candidate for district counts, and for groups above-the-line and below-the-line, and ungrouped candidates for region counts.

Declaration of the result

Election managers are required to publicly declare the election and to announce the name/s of the candidate/s elected.

Elections 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(s). Candidates will be advised of the date, time and location of the declaration.

Region results will be declared by a nominated region election manager at the computerised counting centre.

All elections must be declared before the return of the Writs, therefore the latest possible date for a declaration to take place is Friday 16 December 2022.

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 VEC will commence the non-voter enforcement process in January 2023.

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 and are not automatically exempt. The VEC anticipates sending these notices in early March 2023.

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 2022 State election will be transferred to consolidated revenue.

Appendices

Appendix 1: 2022 Victorian state election timeline

			COUNTDOWN	
FRI	**29 JUL**		120	Final day for lodgement of applications to register a political party Final day for lodgement of applications to change the name or logo of an RPP
SUN	**30 OCT**		27	Information session (independent candidates) at VEC at **2 pm**
MON	**31 OCT**		26	
TUE	**1 NOV**		25	Election offices open to public **ISSUE OF WRITS 6 pm** **CUP DAY**
WED	**2 NOV**		24	Nominations open First day for submission of postal vote applications
THU	**3 NOV**		23	
FRI	**4 NOV**		22	
SAT	**5 NOV**		21	
SUN	**6 NOV**		20	
MON	**7 NOV**		19	
TUE	**8 NOV**		18	Election offices open until **8 pm** Close of rolls at **8 pm**
WED	**9 NOV**		17	
THU	**10 NOV**		16	Close of RPP nominations at **12 noon** Close of group registration **12 noon**
FRI	**11 NOV**		15	Close of independent nominations with EM at **12 noon** Ballot draw commences at **1 pm**
SAT	**12 NOV**		14	
SUN	**13 NOV**		13	Close of group voting ticket lodgements at **12 noon**
MON	**14 NOV**		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	**15 NOV**		11	Early voting open **8:30 am** – **8 pm**
WED	**16 NOV**		10	
THU	**17 NOV**		9	Early voting open **8:30 am** – **8 pm**
FRI	**18 NOV**		8	Close of submission of HTVCs to Commission for registration at **12 noon**
SAT	**19 NOV**		7	Early voting open **9 am - 5 pm**
SUN	**20 NOV**		6	
MON	**21 NOV**		5	Close of HTVC correction period at **12 noon**
TUE	**22 NOV**		4	
WED	**23 NOV**		3	Close of submission of postal vote applications at **6 pm**
THU	**24 NOV**		2	Early voting open **8:30 am** – **8 pm**
FRI	**25 NOV**		1	Close of early voting at **6 pm**
SAT	**26 NOV**		0	**ELECTION DAY**
FRI	**2 DEC**	DAYS PAST ELECTION DAY	6	Last day votes can be admitted to count (**6 pm**)
SAT	**17 DEC**		21	**RETURN OF WRITS** **(on or before this day)**

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

For more details on count plans, please see Appendix 4 and 5.

Appendix 2: District and region list

** Indicates district responsible for the region draw

Region	District
Eastern Victoria	• Bass • Evelyn • Gippsland East • Gippsland South • Hastings • Monbulk • Mornington • Morwell ** • Narracan • Nepean • Pakenham
North-Eastern Metropolitan	• Bayswater • Box Hill • Bulleen • Bundoora • Croydon • Eltham • Glen Waverley • Ivanhoe • Mill Park • Ringwood ** • Warrandyte
Northern Metropolitan	• Broadmeadows • Brunswick • Essendon • Greenvale • Kalkallo • Melbourne ** • Northcote • Pascoe Vale • Preston • Richmond • Thomastown
Northern Victoria	• Benambra • Bendigo East • Bendigo West • Eildon • Euroa • Macedon • Mildura • Murray Plains • Ovens Valley • Shepparton ** • Yan Yean

Appendices

** Indicates district responsible for the region draw

Region	District
South-Eastern Metropolitan	• Berwick • Carrum • Clarinda • Cranbourne • Dandenong ** • Frankston • Mordialloc • Mulgrave • Narre Warren North • Narre Warren South • Rowville
Southern Metropolitan	• Albert Park • Ashwood • Bentleigh • Brighton • Caulfield • Hawthorn ** • Kew • Malvern • Oakleigh • Prahran • Sandringham
Western Metropolitan	• Footscray • Kororoit • Laverton • Niddrie • Point Cook • St Albans ** • Sunbury • Sydenham • Tarneit • Werribee • Williamstown
Western Victoria	• Bellarine • Eureka • Geelong ** • Lara • Lowan • Melton • Polwarth • Ripon • South Barwon • South-West Coast • Wendouree

Appendix 3: Election preparation key milestones

	Start date	End date
Senior Election Officials orientation training	22 November 2021	14 December 2021
Election managers/assistant election managers identified for appointment	28 January 2022	25 February 2022
RPP and independent candidate briefings	14 March 2022	31 October 2022
Office lease period (6 months)	1 August 2022	31 January 2023
Resource delivery and election office set-up	14 August 2022	12 September 2022
Election managers/assistant election managers training	4 July 2022	2 September 2022
Public Enquiry Service operational	26 September 2022	29 November 2022
Contact to election staff re updating details	28 September 2022	30 September 2022
Election managers/assistant election managers in office systems training	17 October 2022	21 October 2022
Election managers in offices	24 October 2022	17 December 2022
Early Voting Centre leasing period (minimum 2 months)	10 October 2022	9 December 2022
Enrolment advertising	17 October 2022	8 November 2022
Centralised Activity Site operational	2 November 2022	16 December 2022

Appendix 4: Proposed district count timeline

Date	Early Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Ordinary Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Absent Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Postal Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Marked as Voted and Provisional Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Preference Distributions and Recounts	2PP where required
Saturday 26 November (Election Day)	• From 8 am: Commence sort in EVCs. • 6 pm: Primary and 2CP counts in EVCs for own District. Package out-of-District votes for vote exchange	• 6 pm: Primary and 2CP count in voting centres	• 6 pm: Voting centres reconcile and package absent votes	• 8 am: Extract, sort and reconcile all postal votes returned to-date (that are to be admitted) at CAS • 6 pm: Primary and 2CP count extracted votes	• Package votes for vote exchange		
Sunday 27 November	**Metro regions:** • Vote exchange collected from EVCs and delivered to CAS for processing		• Absent votes prepared for vote exchange in hubs (metro regions) and EOs (country regions)	• 2CPs corrections at CAS and recheck all postal votes counted	• Package votes for vote exchange		
Monday 28 November	• 2CPs corrections and commence rechecks* at EOs • Commence processing vote exchange at CAS (close seats prioritised)	• 2CPs corrections and commence rechecks* at EOs	• Preparation of absent vote exchange completed (hubs and EOs). Metro regions delivered to CAS	• Extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck* counts for close seats only at CAS	• Provisional vote checking and extraction commences at CAS (close seats prioritised)		
Tuesday 29 November	**Country Regions:** • Vote exchange delivered to CAS. Processing continues **All Regions:** • Commence vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS. Complete rechecks* in EOs	• Complete rechecks* at EOs	**Country Regions:** • Vote exchange delivered to CAS **All Regions:** • Commence processing vote exchange at CAS (close seats prioritised)	• Extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck* counts for all Districts	• Continue provisional vote checking and extraction (close seats prioritised)		
Wednesday 30 November	• Complete processing vote exchange at CAS • Continue vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS (close seats prioritised)		• Complete processing vote exchange. • Commence vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS (close seats prioritised)	• Extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck* counts for all Districts	• Continue provisional vote checking and extraction (close seats prioritised)		
Thursday 1 December	• Continue vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS		• Continue vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS	• Extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck* counts for all Districts	• Continue provisional vote checking and extraction (close seats prioritised)		
Friday 2 December (Last day to accept postal votes into count (6 pm))	• Complete vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS • Primary, 2CP and recheck* counts of ISOS votes at CAS		• Complete vote exchange primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS	• Extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck* counts for all Districts	• Complete provisional vote checking and commence primary, 2CP and recheck* counts at CAS		
Saturday 3 December				• Complete extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck* counts for all Districts	• Complete primary, 2CP and recheck* counts		
Sunday 4 December							

Appendices

Date	Early Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Ordinary Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Absent Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Postal Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Marked as Voted and Provisional Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Preference Distributions and Recounts	2PP where required
Monday 5 December	• CAS dispatches early votes to Districts requiring preference distributions / recounts*		• CAS dispatches absent votes to Districts requiring preference distributions / recounts*	• CAS dispatches postal votes to Districts requiring preference distributions / recounts*	• CAS dispatches provisional and MAV votes to Districts requiring preference distributions / recounts*	• Complete amalgamation of votes at EOs (where required)	• Commence any required 2PP counts at EOs
Tuesday 6 December						• Commence preference distributions and recounts at EOs (where required)	
Wednesday 7 December						• Complete manual preference distributions and continue any recounts	• Commence any 2PP counts at CAS
Thursday 8 December						• Continue recounts at EOs	
Friday 9 December						• Complete any recounts at EOs	
Saturday 10 December							
Sunday 11 December							
Monday 12 December							• All 2PP counts completed
Tuesday 13 December							
Wednesday 14 December							
Thursday 15 December							
Friday 16 December							
Saturday 17 December (Last Day for Return of Writs)							

This is a proposed timeline only. Timings are subject to change

Close seats will have their timelines expedited where possible

EO = election office
EVC = early voting centre
CAS = centralised activity site
ISOS = interstate and overseas venues
2CP = two-candidate preferred
2PP = two-party preferred
MAV = marked as voted

* = certain metro-based close seats may be rechecked and have their preferences distributed by computer count at CAS. Calculations will be scheduled to occur as soon as possible after all postal votes are admitted to the count (cut-off for admission 6 pm on Friday 2 December)

2CP results will not be adjusted after rechecks are conducted. Therefore, there may be some minor variations between 2CP and recheck/final totals

District declarations will commence from Friday 2 December

Appendix 5: Proposed region count timeline

Date	Early Votes Primary and Recheck	Ordinary Votes Primary and Recheck	Absent Votes Primary and Recheck	Postal Votes Primary and Recheck	Marked as Voted and Provisional Votes Primary and Recheck	BTL Data Entry and loading of ATL votes – all Regions
Saturday 26 November (Election Day)	• From 8 am: Commence sort in EVCs	• 6 pm: Primary count in voting centres	• 6 pm: Voting centres reconcile and package absent votes	• 8 am: Extract, sort and reconcile all postal votes returned to-date (that are to be admitted) at CAS	• Package votes for vote exchange	
Sunday 27 November	• Package out-of-District Region early votes for vote exchange **Metro regions:** • Vote exchange collected from EVCs and delivered to CAS for processing		• Absent votes prepared for vote exchange in hubs (metro regions) and EOs (country regions)	• Complete primary count of all extracted papers (from election day) at CAS. Extraction for close seats only at CAS	• Package votes for vote exchange	
Monday 28 November	• Primary count of own (District) Region papers in EVCs **Metro regions:** • Commence processing vote exchange at CAS		• Preparation of absent vote exchange completed (hubs and EOs). Metro regions delivered to CAS	• Complete recheck of all extracted papers (from election day) at CAS. Extraction for District close seats only at CAS	• Provisional vote checking and extraction commences at CAS	
Tuesday 29 November	**Metro regions:** • Complete processing vote exchange at CAS **Country Regions:** • Vote exchange collected from EVCs and delivered to CAS for processing.	• Recheck commences in metro hubs and country EOs	**Country Regions:** • Vote exchange delivered to CAS **All Regions:** • Commence processing vote exchange at CAS	• Extraction for all Districts at CAS	• Continue provisional vote checking and extraction at CAS	
Wednesday 30 November	• Complete processing vote exchange at CAS • Commence rechecks in metro hubs and country EOs	• Rechecks continue	• Complete processing vote exchange at CAS	• Extraction for all Districts at CAS	• Continue provisional vote checking and extraction at CAS	
Thursday 1 December	• Rechecks completed in metro hubs and continue in country EOs	• Rechecks completed		• Extraction for all Districts at CAS	• Continue provisional vote checking and extraction at CAS	
Friday 2 December (Last day to accept postal votes into count (6 pm))	**Metro regions:** • BTLs are dispatched from hubs to CAS **Country Regions:** • Rechecks completed in EOs	**Metro regions:** • BTLs are dispatched from hubs to CAS		• Extraction for all Districts at CAS	• Complete provisional vote checking and extraction at CAS	• Receive and reconcile BTL votes from metro region hubs at CAS
Saturday 3 December	• Commence vote exchange primary and recheck counts at CAS			• Complete extraction for all Districts at CAS		• Batch creation at CAS for BTL votes commences. Progressive batching of other BTL votes counted at CAS
Sunday 4 December	• Complete vote exchange primary and recheck counts at CAS		• Commence vote exchange primary and recheck counts at CAS			• Progressive batching of other BTL votes counted at CAS
Monday 5 December	**Country Regions:** • BTLs are dispatched from EOs to CAS	**Country Regions:** • BTLs are dispatched from EOs to CAS	• Complete vote exchange primary and recheck counts at CAS	• Primary and recheck counts all extracted papers		• Receive and reconcile BTL votes from country EOs and commence batching. • Progressive batching of other BTL votes counted at CAS • Commence first round of BTL data entry

Appendices

Date	Early Votes Primary and Recheck	Ordinary Votes Primary and Recheck	Absent Votes Primary and Recheck	Postal Votes Primary and Recheck	Marked as Voted and Provisional Votes Primary and Recheck	BTL Data Entry and loading of ATL votes – all Regions
Tuesday 6 December	• Primary and recheck counts of ISOS votes at CAS and other centralised support votes				• Complete MAV and provisional primary and recheck counts at CAS	• Complete batching of country EO BTLs • Progressive batching of all other BTL votes • Continue first round of BTL data entry
Wednesday 7 December						• Complete batching of all other BTL votes • Continue first round of BTL data entry
Thursday 8 December						• Continue first round of BTL data entry
Friday 9 December						• Complete first round of BTL data entry
Saturday 10 December						• Commence second round of BTL data entry
Sunday 11 December						• Continue second round of BTL data entry
Monday 12 December						• Complete second round of BTL data entry • Entry of ATL votes and final reconciliation checks
Tuesday 13 December						• Calculate results at CAS • Commence declarations at CAS
Wednesday 14 December						• Any recounts are commenced at CAS
Thursday 15 December						• Any recounts continue
Friday 16 December						• Any recounts are completed and declarations occur at CAS
Saturday 17 December (Last Day for Return of Writs)						

This is a proposed timeline only. Timings are subject to change

BTL = below-the-line
ATL = above-the-line
EO = election office
EVC = early voting centre
CAS = centralised activity site
ISOS = interstate and overseas venues
MAV = marked as voted

Where time allows in the District counting schedule, Region counts may commence earlier than shown in this timeline (counting activities will be communicated to RPPs and independent candidates on a daily basis)

Where Region papers are not progressing straight to count after sorting/processing/extraction, they will be securely stored until counting commences.

Appendix 6: VEC response to EMC recommendations

Table 1 - The VEC supports the recommendation made

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
1 That the VEC consider the appropriateness of its enrolment rate target in light of increases in enrolment nation-wide	The VEC **meets expectation** in adjusting its enrolment rate target to be within 1% of the national average
2 That the VEC regularly publish data on the proportion of eligible electors who are enrolled, broken down by age	The VEC **meets expectation** in expanding annual reporting to include age group enrolment numbers
3 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 VEC **meets expectation** in establishing performance targets for enrolment rate by age, effective June 2023
4 That the VEC conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of VoterAlert at impacting voter turnout, including a cost–benefit analysis, and publish the results	The VEC **meets expectation** of this recommendation and will report on the outcomes of an evaluation of the VoterAlert effectiveness
6 That the VEC identify directly enrolled electors as a priority group for its inclusion and participation efforts and implement engagement programs aimed specifically at increasing turnout among directly enrolled voters	The VEC **meets expectation** in targeting directly enrolled voters ahead of the 2022 State election campaign
8 That the VEC publish apparently intentional and apparently accidental informal voting rates as a percentage of all votes in its post-election reporting	The VEC **meets expectation** of this recommendation and will report on the different types of informal votes
9 That the VEC reinstate its analysis of informal Upper House ballot papers at future elections	The VEC **meets expectation** in reinstating its analysis of Upper House ballot paper informality given the small increase in 2018
12 That the VEC increase the depth of its analysis and reporting on informality at Victorian state elections. This includes election-to-election trends and events specific to individual elections	The VEC **meets expectation** in further building on the informality surveys conducted at every state election since 2006
13 That the VEC publish and discuss turnout by age cohorts in terms of the eligible population in its future reports on state elections	The VEC **meets expectation** in providing analysis of voter turnout by age cohort in the Report to Parliament
14 That, in its research into reasons for not voting and attitudes toward voting among the 25-to-44-year-old age group, the VEC include a focus on the drop in turnout among 30-to-44-year-old electors at the 2018 election	The VEC **meets expectation** in making a concerted effort to promote the various voting options available for eligible electors in November 2022
17 That the VEC explore ways to more objectively measure the effectiveness of its advisory groups as a means of addressing the challenges faced by certain groups of voters	The VEC **exceeds expectation** in developing a set of advisory group effectiveness measures, several of which are included in the advisory group survey
23 That the VEC establish an election performance target for the number of Assisted Wheelchair Access voting centres at future elections	The VEC **meets expectation** in placing a focus on early voting accessibility
25 That the VEC investigate and develop ways to ensure postal voting and other voting methods remain viable options for Victorians who cannot attend a voting centre	The VEC **meets expectation** in determining the viability of the Australian Post system as sufficient to meet State election postal voting demand

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
40	That the VEC further develop its relationship with the police to establish procedures to enable quick and effective responses to any intimidation, harassment, or violence at voting centres	The VEC **meets expectation** in establishing stronger working partnerships with relevant enforcement agencies, including Victoria Police
45	That the Electoral Act be amended to allow early votes to be processed, but not inspected, from 8 am on election day. Scrutineers should have the same access to observe this process as they have for current vote processing practices	The *Electoral Act 2002* has been amended to now allow for early votes to be processed from 8 am on election day, which will be operationalised for the 2022 State election

Table 2 - The VEC supports the recommendation made in part

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
5	That, in future post-election reporting, the VEC publish an analysis of the explanations given for not voting and what that indicates about why people did not vote	The VEC **meets expectation** of this recommendation and will report on its implementation of a solution to support the issue of AFTVN's that capture the reason a response was marked as invalid
10	That the VEC conduct an analysis of Upper House ballot papers to estimate the number of votes that included multiple preferences above the line, to understand how much confusion is being caused by having different systems at Commonwealth and state levels and to inform future information and education campaigns	The VEC **meets expectation** in committing to conduct a comprehensive analysis of informal votes for both Houses at the 2022 State election, in collaboration with the University of Adelaide as part of an Australian Research Council grant
11	That the VEC ensure the research it sponsors into informal voting includes an investigation of: • the reasons for the continued increase in informal voting in Victorian Lower House elections • the consistently high rate of informal voting in Victorian Lower House elections compared to other Australian jurisdictions • the increase in apparently accidental informality at the 2018 election • the reasons for informality in Upper House elections	The VEC **meets expectation** in committing to conduct a comprehensive analysis of informal votes for both Houses at the 2022 State election, in collaboration with the University of Adelaide as part of an Australian Research Council grant
15	That the VEC ensure its research program includes research into the relationship between age and formal voting at Victorian state elections	The VEC **meets expectation** in conducting a market research agency survey of deliberate informal voters that may disclose some age-related patterns
16	That the VEC consider the suggestions from the Committee's CALD community forums as part of developing future plans for engaging with CALD communities	The VEC **meets expectation** in continuing to consult with its CALD Advisory Group as well as sponsoring Active Citizen Leadership programs in 2022 leading to wider opportunity for targeted employment of CALD Democracy Ambassadors
19	That the VEC develop and trial measures within its inclusion and participation efforts to increase turnout among electors across the entire 20-to-39-year-old age cohort and not just the youngest electors	The VEC **meets expectation** of this recommendation and will report on the it's undertaking of a number of initiatives to support a focused effort in engaging directly enrolled electors and overseas travellers

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
20 That the VEC establish an advisory group aimed at advising on engagement programs for voters from 20 to 39 years old, a cohort which consistently shows low turnout	The VEC **meets expectation** in creating a Young Peoples' Inclusion Plan and the establishment of a Young People Advisory Group
27 That the VEC improve its transparency in relation to the security of ballot papers	The VEC **meets expectation** in revising its ballot paper tracking and security policy to improve its transparency in the management of ballot papers through the course of the election
35 That, in future election plans, the VEC include performance indicators that measure the accuracy of primary counts, two-candidate-preferred counts and, where possible, recheck results. Results for these indicators should be included in future reports on state elections	Key performance indicators are not an appropriate measure for this activity. Rather the VEC **meets expectation** having reviewed its policies and procedures relevant to manual counting

Table 3 - The VEC notes the recommendation made

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
18 That the VEC consider the effectiveness of face-to-face outreach as a foundation for efforts to increase electoral participation	The VEC **meets expectation** in continuing to offer both face-to-face and online electoral education for all groups traditionally under-represented in the electoral process
21 That the VEC provide extended voting hours on more days during the early voting period	The VEC **meets expectation** in providing two additional late nights added to the first week of early voting totalling an additional 620 hours state-wide.
22 That the VEC continue to explore new ways to find more suitable early voting and election-day voting centres, including learning from the approaches in other jurisdictions where appropriate	The VEC **meets expectation** in developing the Election Infrastructure Location Strategy (EILS) that looks to optimise the location of early voting and election-day voting centres
24 That the VEC, in its briefings, proactively engage candidates and parties around the need to minimise the anxiety that some voters may experience when approaching campaigners at a voting centre, with the aim of increasing campaigner sensitivity and reducing the anxiety some voters experience	The VEC **meets expectation** in reminding registered political parties and prospective independent candidates through pre-election briefings of their responsibilities to ensure their campaigners are not compromising the safety of voters accessing voting centres
26 That the VEC establish more early voting centres in larger regional districts and consider further innovative ways of providing voting options for voters living in regional Victoria, such as mobile voting centres	The VEC **meets expectation** in developing the Election Infrastructure Location Strategy (EILS) that looks to optimise the location of early voting and election-day voting centres
28 That the Government amend the Electoral Act to: • mandate a minimum length of time between notifying candidates and parties about a recount and commencing the recount • specify a particular form of words in which recounts are announced, to avoid any confusion, and • require the VEC to notify the relevant state secretaries of parties and contact officers for non-party-aligned candidates, as well as the candidates	The *Electoral Act 2002* has been amended to require a minimum of 4 hours' notice is given before commencing a recount and specify the form and distribution list of that notice, which will be operationalised for the 2022 State election if required

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
29 That the VEC provide specific explanations on the results pages of its website for any significant adjustment to figures (e.g., more than 200 votes) made between the primary count or two-candidate-preferred count and the final results (recheck or recount results)	The VEC **meets expectation** through the commitment to publish results from election night in an accurate and timely way. Annotation will not be provided for the data between activities only totals, but variations will be monitored and investigated
30 That the VEC include information about apparent multiple voting in all future reports on state elections. This should include quantifying the number of apparent multiple votes in each district	The VEC **meets expectation** of this recommendation and will report on as much information as is available about apparent multiple voting.
31 That the VEC publish the results of its investigations into multiple voting at each state election, including noting the number of cases which remain unexplained to the VEC's satisfaction	The VEC **meets expectation** of this recommendation in including as much information as is available about apparent multiple voting in the Report to Parliament
32 That the VEC review the election performance indicator and budget paper measure 'Number of legal challenges to VEC conduct upheld' to ensure that what it measures is clear or change what is included when reporting on this measure	The VEC **meets expectation** in providing an updated performance measure that more clearly articulates the basis for the VEC's 'nil' target for election challenges
33 That, in future election plans, the VEC include two new performance indicators with targets that relate to the suitability of venues used as a) early voting centres and b) election-day voting centres	The VEC **meets expectation** in undertaking a full evaluation of venues after the event as a part of its approach outlined in this Service Plan. This will be captured in the Report to Parliament.
34 That, in future election plans, the VEC include two new performance indicators with targets that relate to the proportion of electors who queue for more than 10 minutes at a) early voting centres and b) election-day voting centres	The VEC **meets expectation** through the deployment of queue management technology for internal operational purposes
36 That, in developing future plans and strategies, the VEC include concrete actions, measures and quantified targets in the original plan at the time of release, so that stakeholders have a better understanding of what the VEC intends to do	The VEC **exceeds expectations** with published inclusion action plans available on the VEC website relating to the following areas: Out of Home; Young People; Multicultural; and Disability Access. Each action plan has clear and defined monitoring and evaluation objectives
37 That the VEC make all future inclusion and participation plans, strategies, and key performance indicators publicly available	The VEC **meets expectation** in producing a number of inclusion plans, managed through the Diversity and Inclusion Framework with annual reporting of key performance indicators
38 That the VEC talk with parties to understand their concerns about how-to-vote card registration and identify any changes to processes that could be helpful in the future	The VEC **meets expectation** in providing early messaging on how-to-vote card registration processes through its briefings for political parties and independent candidates
41 That the Government seek to amend Section 158A of the Electoral Act to provide greater clarity around how many signs candidates and parties can set up at voting centres and what is permitted to be on those signs	The *Electoral Act 2002* has been amended to provide greater clarity on the rules governing the exhibition of notices or signs by political parties and candidates in proximity to a voting centre, which will be operationalised for the 2022 State election
42 That the VEC consider the concerns raised in this chapter about the training of election officials as part of its planned review of the effective management of the VEC workforce during an election	The VEC **meets expectation** in updating its election staff training program, with an increased focus in 2022 on online training that allows for election staff to revisit content, as well as providing additional during event training

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
43	That the VEC engage an independent expert to evaluate the effectiveness of its training procedures at the 2022 election	The VEC **exceeds expectations** in undertaking a full post-event training evaluation for both election management teams and election casuals. The audit will be captured in the VEC's internal audit program, supported by Protiviti
44	That, in selecting venues for future elections, the VEC factor in the needs of candidates and volunteers (such as toilets, shelter and appropriate spaces for campaigning) as far as possible	The VEC **meets expectation** in considering the needs of candidates and volunteers as a part of its Election Infrastructure Location Strategy
47	That the Government amend the Electoral Regulations 2012 to remove the requirement for applicants to separately declare that they understand that their name and address may be provided to registered political parties and non-party-aligned candidates	New regulations have been made under the *Electoral Act 2002* with this requirement removed, which will be operationalised for the 2022 State election
48	That the VEC consider improvements to the way it provides successful postal voter application data to political parties and non-party-aligned candidates at future elections, including providing the data sooner and clearly communicating set times for providing the data	The VEC **meets expectation** in providing data daily to RPP's and independent candidates subject to completion of a confidentially agreement

Table 4 - The VEC does not support the recommendation made

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
7	That the VEC provide more detailed explanations of the factors affecting voter turnout at future elections	No further action required
39	That the VEC investigate the practicability of facilitating mental and emotional support services for candidates and their families and include a service in its 2022 election planning if appropriate	No further action required

Table 5 - The recommendation is not applicable to the VEC

EMC Recommendation	VEC compliance with published response
46	That the Government amend the Electoral Act to prohibit any person or organisation other than the VEC from distributing postal vote applications	The *Electoral Act 2002* has been amended to prohibit anyone other than the VEC from distributing postal vote applications, which will be operationalised for the 2022 State election
49	That the Parliament refer an inquiry into possible reforms of the Upper House electoral system to the Electoral Matters Committee	Not applicable

Appendix 7: 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