

2026 state election

Media handbook



Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Electoral Commission acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We honour the unique cultural and spiritual relationships that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with the land, waters and seas, and recognise their enduring contributions to our community and society.

About the VEC

The VEC is an independent and impartial body established under Victoria's *Electoral Act 2002*, responsible for holding state and local council elections. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity by:

- maintaining the register of Victorian electors (the electoral roll)
- promoting public awareness and understanding of electoral issues
- supporting the Electoral Boundaries Commission
- administering Victoria's political funding and donations disclosure rules.

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Introduction from the Electoral Commissioner

The state election on Saturday 28 November 2026 is shaping up to be the largest and most complex in Victoria's history. As Victorians prepare to cast their votes, the media will play an important role in supporting transparency and sharing accurate election information to help all eligible Victorians participate in their democracy.

This handbook has been developed to inform and support your coverage of the state election. The handbook brings together practical guidance, including your key media contacts and voting centre access arrangements, while also explaining key election operations, and the legislative and regulatory framework that underpins the election.

Our media team is also available to provide advice, facilitate access and answer questions throughout the election period.

Confidence in elections depends not only on the integrity of the electoral process itself, but also on the public's understanding of that process. At a time when misinformation can spread rapidly, accurate reporting is more important than ever. By providing you with clear, comprehensive and authoritative information, we aim to support you in informing your audience about their voting rights and how to exercise them, as well as explaining all aspects of the electoral process.

Thank you for the important role you play in empowering Victorians to participate in their democracy, especially during the crucial period leading up to the state election.

Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner

Reporting on elections

Media centre

Our [media centre](#) is where you will find our latest media releases, voting venue guidelines and other useful links to help you cover the 2026 state election. This includes any release of data, such as voter statistics.

You can sign up to receive media releases through the form on the media centre and choose the areas of Victoria relevant for your reporting.

Follow us on social media

Follow us @electionsvic on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), [TikTok](#), [X](#) and [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Contact us

You can make a media enquiry by contacting the VEC Communication team:

- Email: communication@vec.vic.gov.au
- Phone: 03 9067 0296

Attending a voting centre

Voting centre locations and opening hours will be published on the VEC website through the [venue locator](#) from Wednesday 4 November.

If you would like to visit a voting centre during the voting period or the election night count, please contact the VEC Communication team beforehand at communication@vec.vic.gov.au to arrange your visit. On arrival, please check in with the venue manager and complete our visitor registration form.

Filming and photography guidelines

Voting centre staff are focused on making sure voting is secure and processes are met. When filming or taking photographs at voting centres, we ask that you:

- do not block access to the venue
- do not film personal details of voters or candidates
- only capture ballot papers from a distance and at an angle so that they cannot be read
- do not enter or film any ballot paper secure storage zone
- respect the wishes of anyone who does not want to be photographed or filmed.

Please direct requests for interviews with staff to the VEC Communication team.

2026 state election timeline

Victorian state elections are held every 4 years, on the last Saturday in November as set out by the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic). The timeline is fixed by law.

Date	Election timeline
Tuesday 3 November Melbourne Cup Day	• Election offices open to the public at 9 am • Issue of writs at 6 pm • Close of roll at 8 pm
Wednesday 4 November	• Nominations open • Postal vote applications open
Monday 9 November	• Close of nominations for registered political parties, independent candidates and group registration at 12 pm • Ballot draws will follow
Tuesday 10 November	• How-to-vote card registration opens at 9 am
Tuesday 17 November	• Mobile voting opens from 9 am • Low sensory voting from 10 am – 4 pm
Wednesday 18 November – Friday 27 November	• Early voting (including telephone-assisted voting) opens from 9 am to 6 pm every day, except Sunday 22 November (closed)
Friday 20 November	• Close of how-to-vote card registration at 12 noon
Wednesday 25 November	• Postal vote applications close at 6 pm
Friday 27 November	• Early voting closes 6 pm
Saturday 28 November	• Election day voting from 8 am to 6 pm
Friday 4 December	• All votes must be submitted to the count by 6 pm
Saturday 19 December	• Writs must be returned on or before this day

Facts and figures

Voters

Almost 4.7 million Victorians are expected to be enrolled at close of roll at 8 pm on Tuesday 3 November 2026. Regular enrolment statistics are published on our [electoral roll statistics webpage](#)

Historical election statistics

	2010	2014	2018	2022
Enrolment at close of roll	3,582,232	3,806,301	4,139,326	4,394,465
Enrolment rate of estimated eligible population ¹	90.85%	94.21%	96.60%	97.80%
Votes counted ²	3,329,865	3,540,545	3,732,066	3,828,791
Turnout rate of enrolment ³	92.96%	93.02%	90.16%	87.13%
Number of district candidates	502	545	507	740
Number of region candidates	209	351	380	454
Number of total candidates	711	896	887	1,194
Rate of informal voting ⁴	4.96%	5.22%	5.83%	5.53%

Electorates

There are 88 electoral districts in Victoria that make up the Legislative Assembly or Lower House of the Parliament of Victoria. Voters elect one candidate in their district.

There are 8 electoral regions, each containing 11 districts, which make up the Legislative Council or Upper House of the Parliament of Victoria. Voters elect 5 candidates on the ballot and each voter can choose to vote above- or below-the-line.

Operations

- **25,000+** staff
- More than **3 million** EasyVote guides
- Approximately **1,700** election day voting centres
- **13 million** sets of ballot papers printed
- More than **200** early voting centres
- **3.4 million** pencils

¹ Enrolment rate is an estimate only, and is calculated using the estimated eligible population as measured and provided by the Australian Electoral Commission.

² The number of votes counted is for state district elections.

³ Statewide turnout is conventionally calculated using the number of votes counted in state district elections as a proportion of total enrolment at close of rolls.

⁴ The rate of informal voting is calculated using the number of informal votes as a proportion of total votes counted.

What's new in 2026?

You can find the 2026 state election service plan on our [state election reports and plans webpage](#).

The service plan is a key document that outlines the planning and preparation for the 2026 state election. It informs all stakeholders of the measures in place to achieve a successful outcome and high standards of service for candidates, registered political parties and voters.

The plan also provides guidance to election participants on how the 2026 state election will be delivered and highlights key changes to our regulatory and electoral operations since the 2022 state election.

We published a draft election service plan in November 2025 and invited stakeholders to share feedback through a formal consultation process. Stakeholder feedback informed the refinement of our proposed delivery model and helped shape the election services outlined in this plan.

Some of the key updates for the 2026 state election include:

- low sensory mobile voting for voters who are neurodiverse in all 88 districts, including dimmed lighting, reduced noise and additional space
- the mailing of more than 3 million EasyVote guides to Victorian households with information about taking part in the state election
- the expansion of electronic roll mark-off across election venues to provide improved real-time data on voting centre activity, including patronage and ballot paper use, and a quicker mark-off process for voters
- the re-introduction of voting services at selected interstate and overseas locations for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic
- delivery of more than 300 education sessions across the state to help inform voters in the community about participating
- an enhanced operating model, including 32 election hubs that bring district election offices together, a centralised activity site for key vote-counting activities and strengthening statewide oversight, and support through an operational command centre that can quickly resolve issues as they arise.

Voting options

Voting in the state election is compulsory, so we're making it as easy as possible for Victorians to have their say. There are many ways to vote in this election – voters are encouraged to plan ahead and choose the option that suits them best.

Election day voting centres, early voting centres, and interstate and overseas voting locations will be available on our website through the [venue locator](#) from Wednesday 4 November.

Voting early and by post

Early voting is available from 9 am to 6 pm on Wednesday 18 November to Friday 27 November except for Sunday 22 November.

Voters must apply for a postal vote before 6 pm on Wednesday 25 November, and mail their postal vote back to the VEC or take it to a voting centre before 6 pm on Saturday 28 November.

Anyone can vote early or by post – voters don't need a reason. These options are increasing in popularity and it is projected that most voters will cast their vote before election day.

Voting by phone

Telephone-assisted voting is available to people who are blind or have low vision, or who have a physical disability and need help to vote. Voters must contact us to register for telephone-assisted voting. Ballot papers in Braille are also available on request.

Mobile voting

Neurodivergent voters who need a calmer environment to vote in, and their support people, can use low sensory mobile voting services, available from 10 am to 4 pm on Tuesday 17 November. Each district will have one low sensory voting option.

We also deliver mobile voting services to aged-care facilities, hospitals, homeless shelters and prisons.

Voting outside of Victoria

Voters interstate or overseas on election day can vote early, apply for a postal vote or visit one of our interstate or overseas voting venues.

Making voting more accessible

Alongside the range of voting services, voting centres also include access to voting instructions in 29 languages and on demand Auslan interpreting services, large magnifying sheets, maxi pencils and wheelchair voting booths.

We also audit all election venues for accessibility and make sure each district has at least one fully accessible early or election day voting centre. Accessibility information is included on our [venue locator](#).

For more information about voting options, accessibility features, eligibility and how each option works, visit our [voting options webpage](#).

VEC campaigns

Make your voice heard. Every vote counts

Every vote counts and we will encourage voters to make their voices heard with a statewide campaign from October.

The campaign will encourage all Victorians to participate in their democracy with information about enrolment, voting options and support.

Stop and consider

A campaign will also launch in October to address the spread of false or misleading information about the election process.

There are no laws that regulate truth in political advertising in Victoria; however, all election campaign material must be authorised under the law (see section on election rules).

That's why we will encourage Victorians to 'stop and consider' where any information is coming from that tells them how, when or where to vote.

We will work with major digital platforms, including Meta, Google, Microsoft, TikTok, X, Reddit, Snap and Tencent to flag misinformation that breaches the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) or platform policy for restriction or removal.

You can find misinformation we've debunked on our [misinformation register](#) webpage. We encourage you to contact the VEC Communication team to check information about election processes.

Parties and candidates

There were 23 registered political parties and 1,194 candidates nominated at the state election in 2022.

A list of political parties currently registered in Victoria is available on the [political party register](#) on our website, along with a record of the [changes to the register](#) over time.

A registered political party:

- can have its name printed on ballot papers next to its candidates
- can nominate all candidates and register how-to-vote cards through a central process, instead of with an individual election manager
- can register its logo
- can receive public funding
- can access enrolment information for permitted uses, which does not include phone numbers or email addresses.

An unregistered political party can still participate in elections but without these benefits.

Who can be a candidate

To nominate as a state election candidate, you must be enrolled to vote in Victoria.

You cannot nominate if you:

- are a judge of a court of Victoria
- have been convicted or found guilty of an offence with a prison term of 5 years or more in a Victorian or federal court
- are bankrupt
- are a member of either house of the Australian Parliament.

Local government councillors, and Victorian and Australian public service staff can nominate, but cannot take office without first resigning from their existing role.

More information about candidates and parties is available on our [candidates and parties webpage](#).

The count

Victoria uses 2 different counting methods, depending on the house:

- **Legislative Assembly** (district) elections use preferential counting. To win a seat, a candidate must receive more than 50% of all formal votes.
- **Legislative Council** (region) elections use proportional representation. To win a seat, a candidate must achieve a proportion of formal votes known as a quota.

Accuracy is our highest priority during vote counts.

On election night

Counting begins as soon as possible after voting closes at 6 pm. Winners may be predicted by election analysts, but we will not declare a result on election night.

Most voting centres conduct 3 counts on the night, in order:

1. **First preference count (district):** ballot papers are sorted to first preference for each candidate or to informal. A tally is provided of the number of votes per candidate and the total number of informal ballot papers.
2. **Two-candidate-preferred (2CP) count (district):** an indicative count distributing preferences to the 2 candidates considered most likely to have the highest number of votes after a full preference distribution, giving an early indication of the result for the public, candidates, parties and analysts.

We will determine the 2CP pairing for each district before election day. These predictions are made using expert electoral knowledge, political science and data science techniques based on the best available data. The 2CP will remain confidential until voting has closed.

We will monitor the results of the 2CP counts throughout election weekend. Where the selected 2CP candidates in a district election appear incorrect, we may decide to correct the 2CP pairing at the commencement of the recheck process if a more accurate selection can be determined at that point in time.

The 2CP is indicative only and has no bearing on the official outcome. It does not replace the formal full preference distribution that will provide the margin between the final 2 candidates with the highest number of votes in each district election.

3. **First preference count (region):** ballot papers are sorted to first preference for each group (above- and below-the-line) and ungrouped candidate. A tally is provided of the number of votes per group and ungrouped candidate, and the total number of informal ballot papers.

In our election hubs, we will also count in-district early votes cast in mobile and early voting centres to first preference and 2CP. In cases where high volumes of early votes mean that we could not reasonably complete counting on election night, some of these counts will be scheduled for the following day, Sunday 29 November.

At our centralised activity site, we will count admitted postal votes to first preference and 2CP.

After election night

Counting will continue from Sunday 29 November in line with our election service plan, available at vec.vic.gov.au. Our plan also includes rechecks to ensure an accurate result.

For district elections, preference distributions will begin from Thursday 10 December 2026 and are expected to be completed on Friday 11 December. If a district election requires a recount, this will occur from Monday 14 December.

Legislative Council region election results are expected to be calculated on Wednesday 16 December 2026. The date and time will be advised closer to the time.

The results

Accuracy is our highest priority during vote counts. Winners may be predicted by election analysts, but we will not declare the official result in each electorate until it is certain.

We will publish progressive results on our website as these become available on election night.

While district election first preference numbers may be available from smaller voting centres on election day from approximately 6.30 pm, many voting centres are likely to report first preference results by about 9 pm.

These numbers will continue being updated as counting is completed after election night.

Final results

We must declare all results before the return of the writs on or before Saturday 19 December.

District election declarations are expected to start from Wednesday 9 December and region election declarations are expected to start on Wednesday 16 December.

Please contact the VEC Communication team in advance if you want to attend the results declaration.

Results feed

We provide a machine-readable results data feed for use by media and analysts. The feed provides the same information that is available on the VEC website but is in a format designed for software used by broadcast and digital publication systems.

Media requesting access to the feed must agree to terms of use. A user guide will be provided, but as we will be unable to provide technical support to embed the feed into your applications, we encourage you to use our website to source result information if you do not have technical support in-house.

We will also run a trial of the feed on Wednesday 25 November. This will use test data to help feed users test transmission of results. To maintain the confidentiality of the 2CP selections until 6 pm on election night, 2CP data will not be included in the trial.

If you would like access to the results feed, visit the media centre at vec.vic.gov.au/media

Election rules

We do more than just run elections. We are also the regulator of Victoria's electoral environment.

This means it's our job to make sure everyone plays by the rules, to safeguard free and fair elections and protect Victoria's democracy.

Legislative changes

The *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) is the main law that determines how the VEC operates, delivers elections and regulates elections. Any changes to this legislation are made by Parliament.

There have been 3 recent changes to election laws:

- the *Electoral Amendment Act 2026* (Vic) commenced on 25 May 2026, changing timelines and processes for elections
- the *Electoral Further Amendment Act 2026* (Vic) changed the political donation and funding frameworks that apply to elections
- the *Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Act 2026* (Vic) removed group voting tickets and clarified some political donation and funding laws.

See [legislation](#) on our website for more information.

Our approach to regulation

We use a constructive compliance approach to help people understand the rules and how to meet their obligations under the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic). When we suspect an electoral offence may have been committed, we will investigate and take appropriate action.

Priority areas of regulation at this state election are authorisation of electoral material, voting centre safety, and timely and accurate disclosure and compliance with the political donation cap.

Authorisation of electoral material

There are no laws that regulate truth in political advertising in Victoria however all electoral material must be authorised under the law.

Electoral material is something that is intended to or likely to affect the way someone votes in an election.

An authorisation statement is a line that states the name and address of the person, body politic or body corporate responsible for the material. This helps voters understand where the material came from and helps them decide how much they value or trust the material.

Anyone publishing printed electoral material or paid advertisements containing electoral material must include an authorisation. Material produced by or on behalf of registered political parties, candidates and elected members needs authorisation, even if it is not paid or printed.

Authorisation tips for media

Paid content

- Any paid article or content in a newspaper that contains electoral matter must include the word 'advertisement' to be printed as a headline. The size of the headline is regulated and 'paid' also includes for reward or compensation. This requirement applies at all times.

Letters to the editor

- From the issue of writ in an election until 6 pm on election day, all published articles, reports and letters that contain electoral matter must include the author's name and address at the end.
- Letters to the editor only require the author's name and a suburb or locality where the author's address is located. This includes printed and online media.
- Articles produced as news reporting do not require the author's name and address.

Electoral matter is any content that is intended, or likely, to influence how someone votes in an election. Content will also be electoral matter if it mentions:

- an election
- current and former members of Parliament, including as government and opposition members
- a political party
- a candidate
- an issue put to voters at the election.

For more information about authorisation visit vec.vic.gov.au

Safety outside voting centres

We want to make sure that everyone can attend our voting centres safely and cast their vote free of interference or intimidation.

Voting centres are also a workplace for VEC staff, candidates and campaigners, and members of the media. It is our duty under the law to make these workplaces safe.

We have a registration system for visitors to election venues to register their name and emergency contact details. We have also developed a new campaigner handbook, including information about the behaviours we can expect from campaigners that was co-designed with registered political parties to support a positive experience.

Timely and accurate disclosure and compliance with the political donation cap

It is important all Victorians understand political funding, donation disclosure and reporting. Candidates, registered political parties and donors should understand their obligations under the law and make their public disclosures in a timely way.

The key obligations are:

- Donations of \$1,290 must be disclosed within 21 days.
- There is a general cap for political donations of \$5,190. A single donor cannot donate more than the general cap to a single recipient between 15 April and 28 November 2026.
- Eligible independent candidates and registered political parties can register to be a new entrant. Registered new entrants have a higher general donation cap of \$10,380 from each donor.
- Foreign donations are banned.
- Anonymous donations of \$1,290 or more are banned.

Donations of \$100 or less do not count towards the disclosure threshold or general donation cap.

Donations above the disclosure threshold are published on our [disclosed donations webpage](#) within 7 days of being disclosed.

Donations must be disclosed by both the donor and the recipient. This provides an opportunity to identify any errors or inconsistencies.
