

Annual Report 2020–21

Delivering elections in lockdown



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AEC	Australian Electoral Commission	JRMC	Joint Roll Management Committee
AEM	Assistant Election Manager	KMP	Key Management Personnel
AIP	Aboriginal Inclusion Plan	LGA 1989	Local Government Act 1989
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria	LGA 2020	Local Government Act 2020
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	LGI	Local Government Inspectorate
CCYP	Commission for Children and Young People	LG2020 elections	2020 local government elections
COAG	Council of Australian Governments	LSL	Long service leave
COVID-19	Coronavirus	LTI	Lost time injury
DA	Democracy Ambassador	MIP	Multicultural Inclusion Plan
DAIP	Disability Access and Inclusion Plan	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
DoT	Department of Transport	OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet	OHSC	Occupational Health and Safety Committee
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance	OHSMS	Occupational Health and Safety Management System
DWG	Designated Work Groups	OVIC	Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner
EAAG	Electoral Access Advisory Group	PG	Planning Group
EAP	Employee Assistance Program	PID Act	Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012
EBC	Electoral Boundaries Commission	PMC	Prime Minister and Cabinet
EBC Act	Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982	PMO	Project Management Office
ECANZ	Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand	PMS	People Matter Survey
Electoral Act	Electoral Act 2002	PROV	Public Record Office of Victoria
EM	Election Manager	PTD	Passport to Democracy
EMC	Electoral Matters Committee	RMS	Roll Management System
EMG	Executive Management Group	RoU	Right of Use
EMS	Election Management System	RSC	Resource Smart Committee
EO	Election Official	RTW	Return to work
ERRN	Electoral Regulation Research Network	SEO	Senior Election Official
FMCF	Financial Management Compliance Framework	SLG	Senior Leadership Group
FOI Act	Freedom of Information Act 1982	VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
FRD	Financial Reporting Directions	VEC	Victorian Electoral Commission
FTE	Full time equivalent	VicSRC	Victorian Student Representative Council
HSR	Health and Safety Representative	VIPP	Victorian Industry Participation Policy
HSW	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	VPS	Victorian Public Sector
IPAA	Institute of Public Administration Australia	VPSC	Victorian Public Sector Commission
IRP	Issue Resolution Procedures		
JRMB	Joint Roll Management Board		

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The Hon. Danny Pearson MP
Assistant Treasurer
Minister for Regulatory Reform
Minister for Government Services
Minister for Creative Industries

1 Treasury Place
Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Victorian Electoral Commission for the year ending 30 June 2021 for presentation to Parliament. Also included is the *Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission 2020-21* for the year ending 30 June 2021.

Yours sincerely



Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

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

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ABOUT THE VEC

OUR HISTORY AND FUNCTIONS

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

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

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

- The *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act) establishes the VEC as an independent statutory authority, sets out its functions and powers and prescribes processes for State elections.
- The *Constitution Act 1975* sets out who is entitled to enrol as an elector, who is entitled to be elected to Parliament, and the size and term of Parliament.
- The *Financial Management Act 1994* governs the way the VEC manages finances and financial reporting.
- The *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982* (EBC Act) governs the determination of State electoral boundaries. Under this legislation, the Electoral Commissioner is nominated as a member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC).
- The *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) provides for the conduct of local government elections. The LGA 2020 received Royal Assent on 24 March 2020 and replaced the *Local Government Act 1989* (LGA 1989).
- The *Infringements Act 2006* provides for stages two and three of compulsory voting enforcement.

Subject to these Acts, the VEC:

- maintains the electoral enrolment register
- conducts State elections, local government elections, statutory elections and polls, and fee-for-service elections
- conducts electoral boundary reviews
- administers political funding and donation disclosure laws.

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

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

OUR PEOPLE AND PARTNERS

The VEC values its people, recognising they are its biggest asset. It cultivates a workforce that is skilled, accountable, adaptable and collaborative.

The VEC's core workforce of dedicated people ensures the success of its operations through the application of their specialised knowledge. At times of peak activity, the VEC draws on the expertise of many associated personnel, including election officials and contractors, to complement the work of its core staff. Valued partnerships with suppliers also contribute greatly to the VEC's achievements.

The VEC has a proud tradition of supporting diversity and inclusion. Working closely with a range of advisory and community groups, the VEC continues to strive to ensure all people are included in the electoral process. These groups comprise members of under-represented communities, including:

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

The VEC is very grateful to all advisory and community group members and their organisations for their contributions during 2020-21 and thank them for their continued support.

OUR PURPOSE

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

OUR VALUES

Independence: acting with impartiality and integrity.

Accountability: transparent reporting and effective stewardship of resources.

Innovation: shaping our future through creativity and leadership.

Respect: consideration of self, others and the environment.

Collaboration: working as a team with partners and communities.

OUR VISION

All Victorians actively participating in their democracy.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report provides a summary of the activities, programs and initiatives undertaken by the VEC in delivering on its responsibilities and the key objectives of Strategy 2023.

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

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OUR YEAR

In this section, the Electoral Commissioner, Warwick Gately AM, provides a summary of key activities, achievements for 2020-21 and the outlook for 2021-22. The summary covers the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the VEC's delivery of the 2020 local government (LG2020) election program and its operations and plans; the VEC's progress in implementing Strategy 2023; and commentary on how the VEC has engaged with its community and key contacts through the contribution of its people. Also discussed is how the VEC met its general compliance and accountability responsibilities.

Chief Financial Officer, Binh Le, provides an overview of the VEC's financial performance. This section includes a summary of the VEC's achievements against its strategic initiatives.

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OUR COMMISSION

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

This section provides detail of the VEC's regulatory environment, its governance and organisational structures, key people and staff profiles, disclosure requirements, and the corporate systems that enable the VEC to deliver its core business and operate effectively and efficiently on a day-to-day basis.

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

Information relating to internal and external advisory groups is also detailed in this section. These advisory groups play an important role for the VEC.

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OUR CORE BUSINESS

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

Part of the VEC's core business is also focused on building communication capability to increase the awareness of, and engagement with, electoral events and matters.

This financial year realised the delivery of local government election services for 76 of Victoria's 79 councils. Nine other election activities were also conducted, including local government by-elections, countbacks and commercial elections and polls.

73**OUR STAKEHOLDERS**

The VEC has a broad diversity of stakeholders that are essential to achieving the organisation's vision. This section highlights the priority the VEC places on continually improving their engagement with electors, candidates, political parties and electoral bodies.

The VEC Diversity and Inclusion Framework continues to be embedded through a range of organisation-wide inclusion plans which support addressing the needs of those traditionally under-represented in the electoral process. An update on all existing inclusion plans and related community engagement work for LG2020 is outlined. Furthermore, the services to candidates and the registration and re-registration of political parties is summarised. Finally, the work completed with various national and international electoral bodies which aims to support innovation and electoral harmonisation is outlined.

87**OUR PEOPLE**

The VEC supports a working environment that is empowering, engaging, stimulating and inspiring.

This section highlights the VEC's continued investment in building capability across the organisation, and its approach to supporting Strategy 2023.

101**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

The VEC is pleased to provide 'value for money' electoral services to the Victorian public. Once again, the VEC's sound and robust financial management is evidenced in this section by an unqualified report from the Auditor-General. This section also provides the VEC's audited financial statements for 2020-21.

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OUR HIGHLIGHTS



Successful delivery of local government elections for 76 Victorian councils in October 2020.



Launch of the VEC's own Online Research Panel



Achieving gold for the VEC Annual Report 2019-20 at the 2021 Australasian Reporting Awards.



Customer journey mapping for key stakeholders required to interact with the VEC and subsequent development of voter personas.



Delivery of the Leadership Excellence Accelerator Program (LEAP), a suite of leadership journeys aligned to the VEC Leadership Capability Framework.



Implementing the VEC Diversity and Inclusion Framework, which includes the VEC's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-23, Multicultural Inclusion Plan 2020-23 and Young People Inclusion Plan 2021-23.



Providing administrative and technical assistance to the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) for the redivision of State electoral boundaries including publication of the proposed boundaries report.



Conducting local government by-elections, countbacks, commercial elections and polls under COVID-19 restrictions required the necessary redesign of services to include candidate information sessions, ballot draws, counting activities, and declaration of results being conducted online.



Delivery of the VEC's first Geospatial Strategy as well as new geospatial tools, including the online Interactive Map enabling Victorians to easily identify their Local Government and State electorates, and a Public Submission and Mapping Tool assisting Victorians to participate in the redivision of State electoral boundaries.



With the challenges of operating in the ongoing pandemic, the VEC has continued to support both onsite and remote working environments for more than 220 staff and contractors. The VEC remains agile and responsive to changes in the landscape and continues to work within a hybrid work model that supports staff and the operational business requirements.

OUR CHALLENGES

- Implementing operational changes imposed by late amendments to legislation.
- Conducting the 2020 local government elections during COVID-19 restrictions and the necessary redesign of services, including community engagement with under-represented communities.
- Embracing new ways of working, including adoption of ongoing flexible and remote working arrangements, in a continually evolving work landscape.
- Continual engagement of key stakeholders in the 2020 local government elections program such that operational decisions and changes were unsurprising.

Our year

“ On 11 November 2020, following the declaration of results for all 298 elections for 76 councils, it was concluded that the program was very successful; a program that dominated the VEC’s work for over eight months. ”



Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

A VERY DIFFERENT YEAR

At the start of the reporting year, Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) staff were working from home and subject to Government lockdown restrictions. Continuing in metropolitan Melbourne until 26 October 2020, the restrictions proved challenging given the VEC’s legal obligation to conduct local government elections across Victoria. These elections, held in October every four years under a strict statutory timeline, are a critical component of Victoria’s democratic landscape.

The elections were like no other held in Victoria. The constraints imposed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic added further complexity to an already demanding schedule of work. The challenges were not just COVID-related; a new Local Government Act 2020 (LGA 2020) came into force in March 2020 and Local Government (Electoral) Regulations were made on 7 July 2020, affecting election operations. There were also changes to Ministerial portfolio responsibilities in June 2020, which complicated reporting. Lobbying to postpone the elections by elements of the local government sector also continued into July 2020. Yet on 11 November 2020, following the declaration of results for all 298 elections for 76 councils, it was concluded that the election program was very well conducted; a program that dominated the VEC’s work for over eight months.

The 2020 local government (LG2020) elections were just part of the VEC’s activity this year: our reporting and compliance obligations were met in full; our focus on people continued; Strategy 2023 projects and initiatives were advanced; education and community outreach strategies were refreshed; and support provided to other electoral commissions in their COVID-19 election response was comprehensive.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS SUCCESSFULLY DELIVERED

As stated last year, the Victorian Government’s decision in May 2020 to proceed with the local government elections, by postal voting, removed planning uncertainty. This decision was confirmed on 19 August and elections would be held on 24 October 2020 as scheduled. Drawing on its Election Service Plan in combination with a specific COVIDSafe supplement and specialist groups and advisors, the VEC worked tirelessly to meet its election obligations; operating procedures and plans were constantly reviewed and adjusted to align with evolving health directions, and other work, health and safety obligations.

While the elections were conducted entirely by post, a casual workforce of 6000 people operating from 80 venues was still required; their safety, along with that of all other election participants, was paramount. By way of success, no election participant, employee or venue was affected by the virus itself.

OUR YEAR (CONT)

In further measuring success, the elections realised the highest ever average voter turnout for Victorian local government elections at 81.4%, from an electoral roll comprising 4.29 million voters. Informal voting, at 4.76%, was much lower than in 2016, even with a record 2186 candidates contesting 298 simultaneous elections. These figures and the fact that all compliance, integrity, accuracy and service delivery targets were met provides strong assurance as to the election program's success.

The task of bringing together candidate nominations, their statements, photographs and questionnaire responses, then printing almost five million ballot packs was enormous and required close monitoring. Thereafter, the 80 election offices were busy receiving and processing returned ballot papers in preparation for counting activities. Again, in measuring success, I note that all elections were declared two days ahead of the target date of 13 November 2020, despite the restrictions.

Not to be overlooked are the contracted service providers who contributed to the delivery of the election program, not least Australia Post, whose performance was critical to its success. The same can be said for the printers, mail houses and transport providers, who successfully managed their risks and contributed to the overall logistical effort.

Every whole-of-State electoral event in Victoria is large and complex, and the 2020 local government elections in the circumstances of a global pandemic were no exception. Despite the prevailing restrictions, disruptions, changes and community anxieties, the VEC delivered an election program that was compliant, accurate and safe. Every eligible Victorian had the opportunity to elect their local council representative. In all, it was a program of work that was very well done.

RESPONDING TO GOVERNING LEGISLATION

While there were no changes to principal legislation this year, Local Government (Electoral) Regulations were made on 7 July 2020, just seven weeks before the start of the local government election period. Included were important provisions specific to COVID-19, allowing candidate nominations to be taken other than in person and for scrutineer numbers to be limited in some circumstances. While not exercised, further changes to the Regulations provided mitigation options for disruptions to the election timeline, such as a delay across the postal network.

At the end of the year, the VEC was developing proposals for changes to the *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act) consistent with the Government's response to the recommendations from the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) report into the conduct of the 2018 State election. Ideally, any changes to this Act will be made by early 2022. Related, the EMC will deliver its next report into the *Impact of Social Media on Elections and Electoral Administration* in mid-September 2021, also with possible implications for the 2022 State election.

As allowed under the LGA 2020, there is provision to dispute the validity of an election. There were nine matters arising from the council elections put before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) covering, for example, candidate interaction, campaigning behaviour and close results. While most have been dealt with, one serious matter reported by the VEC regarding potential interference in a ward election remains unresolved at the time of writing.

During the year, an expanding Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch has been increasingly involved in compliance and integrity matters, including the close examination of internal processes. Its obligations since 2018 in administering election expenditure and political donations in Victoria has required sound business processes and systems and firm stakeholder management. Liaison with other Victorian compliance and enforcement agencies has been strong and crucial to the VEC maturing its capability.

As required by the Electoral Act and commencing in December, the VEC's support to the EBC has been significant and evidenced with the publication of the proposed boundaries report on 30 June 2021. The community input to this State redivision activity was very positive and made easier through an online Public Submission and Mapping Tool and an online public hearing. After further community consultation, the final boundaries report will be released at the end of October 2021, with the new boundaries to apply at the 2022 State election.

PLANS AND OPERATIONS

The VEC's Planning Group (PG) was very active managing the LG2020 elections up to December. Since January, PG's focus has been to review the elections and capture important process and efficiency lessons and has recently shifted to long-range planning for the 2022 State election.

Already, several strategic themes for the State election have been identified and will be expanded upon next year. This includes providing fit-for-purpose systems and infrastructure, workforce planning, increasing voter participation and improved results management.

In the year, a further nine electoral activities were conducted, including local government by-elections, countbacks, commercial elections and polls.

Since its launch in July 2018, Strategy 2023 has delivered many programs, projects and initiatives within its people, technology, decision-making and relationships focus. The Strategy also underwent a mid-term review with the recommendation to refine the strategic framework and include improved outcome statements and success measures. Again, the Strategy has delivered much, including business application developments, various frameworks and action plans and an improved elector focus. A total of six major projects have been completed this year with another six due for completion next year.

The VEC's investment in information and communications technology continued throughout the year. Security upgrades, the removal of vulnerabilities and general resilience improvements were included. System availability consequently has been very high including for remote working. The modernisation of major election systems also advanced; the long-running EMS redevelopment project should be completed in early 2022, along with other State election applications, and a new roll management system has been identified as a priority for 2022 with solution analysis now occurring.

OUR PEOPLE

I offer my overwhelming praise for all staff at the VEC, who this year delivered their core election responsibilities under trying circumstances. Without exception their resilience, flexibility and focus on service delivery allowed all Victorians the opportunity to elect their local council representatives. I also acknowledge the work and patience of those 6,000 officials in the election offices and counting venues across the State.

I note specifically the challenges presented in rapidly moving election official training to an online format and rearranging community outreach programs where in-person engagement was impossible. I sincerely thank all VEC staff and officials involved in the elections and in the routine functioning of the VEC.

Local government elections aside, the VEC must continually function as an accountable integrity and regulatory agency, responsive in turn to whole of Government policies and guidelines. This requires an executive fully aware of their responsibilities and competent in their ability to direct and control the VEC. The Executive Management Group were equal to this task and provided the acute advice that I needed as Chief Executive Officer.

I must acknowledge the work of Liz Williams who completed her term as Deputy Electoral Commissioner on 30 April 2021, closing 15 years in the role. Since commencing with the VEC in 1992, Liz has made an outstanding contribution to the VEC and by extension election operations in Victoria. Her focus on continuously improving election services and her commitment to innovation has benefited all Victorians.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

This year's appropriation from Government also provided for the local government elections. While VEC marginal costs for these elections were recovered from client councils, this occurred well after the purchasing and delivery of services. This noted, given the uncertainty surrounding the elections and the operation and process changes required due to COVID-19, the VEC absorbed costs not identified in quotations and related to keeping election staff safe. This amounted to \$1.2 million.

The Audit and Risk Committee met twice in person and twice online. The Committee's focus this year was on risk associated with the local government elections and the resilience of the VEC in continuing to deliver election services under pandemic arrangements. The direction and support of the Committee was again highly valued, and I acknowledge the contribution of Ms Carol Pagnon, as an independent Committee member, on concluding her term on 25 March 2021.

Relevantly, the internal audit program focused also on the local government elections, assessing the VEC's management of the compulsory voting process, information and knowledge management, and complaints management. The VEC's stakeholder management processes were also examined and found to be more than adequate. Standing audits of the VEC's compliance with Ministerial Standing Directions and access to data from the Department of Transport and Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages were also conducted with the VEC considered compliant.

OUR YEAR (CONT)

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY AND CONTACTS

Engagement with our community and contacts continued successfully throughout the year. Given the initial focus on the local government elections, VEC messages about democracy and engaging with our electoral system were delivered mostly via social media and the website, with print media used for some statutory advertisements. Engagement with the disability sector, young people and CALD communities occurred online. A series of election-related videos were produced for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and shared online. Passport to Democracy sessions also continued via virtual classrooms, attracting 23,519 students over the year. In a departure from previous years, all community advisory groups came together in one online meeting in December, with this event also being used to launch the VEC's Multicultural Inclusion Plan. This plan is one of several inclusion plans targeting marginalised groups. Pleasingly, the role of Aboriginal Inclusion Officer was filled, and community engagement events recommenced.

The Electoral Regulation Research Network (ERRN) continued its activities during the year. These were mostly online with conveners in several states delivering a variety of relevant and interesting seminars covering topics such as social media and technology in elections, money in politics and, not surprisingly, the United States Presidential System and Electoral Law. Newsletters and working papers were also produced. A course, the Regulation of Australian Elections, was held online at the end of May involving over 50 participants from electoral commissions around Australia and New Zealand.

The Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) met on many occasions this year given the number of election events occurring across Australia and, notably, the general election in New Zealand. The purpose principally was to exchange information on jurisdictional responses to the pandemic and effective adjustments to election operations from which all commissions would benefit. This collegiate approach was very successful. The Interjurisdictional Working Group on Election Integrity and Security continued to meet online. This federally driven group focused on developing the framework for a common national electoral platform that will ultimately be advanced to the National Cabinet for its consideration.

LOOKING AHEAD

The uncertainty of the previous 12 months will continue despite national efforts to combat COVID-19. Disruption to the VEC's patterns of work and service delivery arrangements must be expected. Managing risks is a key focus looking to the State election in November 2022.

That said, the next 12 months can be approached with full confidence given the successful delivery of the local government election program, as a core activity, and the evident resilience of our people, procedures and systems. As a priority the VEC must complete the EMS redevelopment as it is critical to the delivery of the 2022 State election. Other identified 2022 election service improvements must also be completed and managed alongside necessary changes to election day and early voting arrangements, consistent with changing voter behaviours.

For the VEC workforce, both permanent and casual, their training and development must also receive attention, acknowledging that flexible work arrangements at the VEC will need to continue with both the requirements of the business and the individual being accommodated wherever possible.



Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

FINANCE AT A GLANCE

The delivery of large-scale electoral services alternates biennially, fluctuating the VEC's special appropriation, expenditure and equity position. With 2020-21 being an electoral year, the delivery of 2020 local government elections resulted in an increase to special appropriation funding and expenditure volumes. This reporting period, the VEC successfully delivered all electoral activities on schedule and within budget. Figure 1 below summarises the movement in the funding, expenses, balance sheet items and net cash flows over a five-year period, highlighting the impact of hosting major electoral events.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

FIGURE 1: FIVE-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2016-17 TO 2020-21

	2016-17 \$'000	2017-18 \$'000	2018-19 \$'000	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
Electoral activity	Local government elections		State election		Local government elections
Special appropriation	52,336	33,606	89,620	37,536	74,949
Total expenses from transactions	51,453	34,260	94,298	38,576	77,651
Net result from transactions	883	(654)	(4,678)	(1,040)	(2,702)
Net result for the period	917	(652)	(4,780)	(966)	(2,616)
Net cash flow from/(used in) operating activities	(4)	(39)	(14)	531	(241)
Total assets	12,746	17,158	17,939	23,999	27,065
Total liabilities	5,056	5,280	5,805	6,120	6,795
Net assets	7,690	11,878	12,134	17,879	20,270

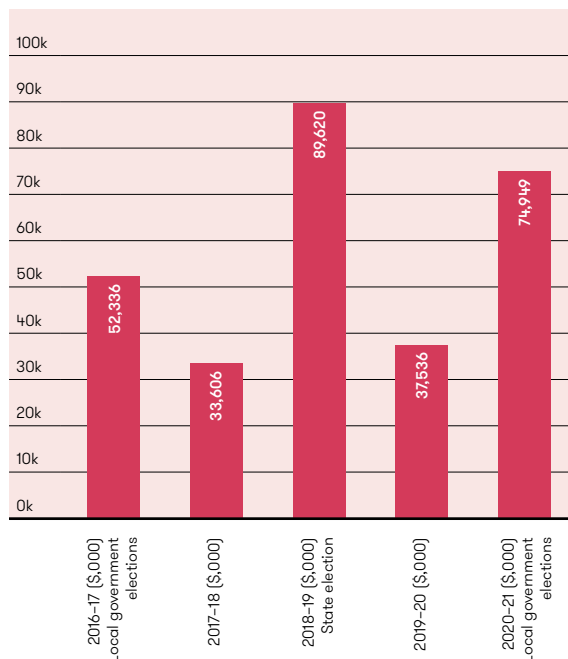
FUNDING

The VEC received \$74.95 million in funding for 2020-21, which is significantly greater than the prior year of \$37.54 million. This was due to the costs incurred in delivering the 2020 local government election program. The VEC is funded solely from Government special appropriations and this amount represents the reimbursement to the VEC for all its cash payments.

In addition, the VEC administers or manages other activities and resources on behalf of the State and local governments, and this income for the year was \$45.40 million. This is not shown in the VEC financial results or in the financial statements, but is declared in Note 4.1: Administered (non-controlled) items. The administered activities are made up of:

- revenue collected by the VEC on behalf of the State, which is forwarded to the Department of Treasury and Finance as consolidated revenue
- monies received from election fines and forfeited candidate deposits collected by the VEC on behalf of councils and the State
- payment of 2022 advance public funding and administrative expenditure funding, following the introduction of political funding and disclosure legislation in August 2018.

FIGURE 2: SPECIAL APPROPRIATION (\$'000) 2016-17 TO 2020-21



EXPENDITURE

The VEC incurred \$77.65 million in operational expenses for the financial period. This is slightly greater than the special appropriation received from Government, which is due to non-cash expenditure such as depreciation, accruals and staff entitlement provisions. Government reimbursement for appropriation does not include non-cash expenses.

In relation to the local government election, the major categories of expenditure included:

- upscaled workforce of election staffing which include casuals and election officials
- infrastructure and overhead costs to support the 76 local council elections
- investment and expenditure in IT security
- advertising and awareness initiatives
- print and production of ballot material
- purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure the election was delivered in a COVID-safe manner.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The VEC's financial position remains strong with total assets of \$27.10 million, liabilities at \$6.80 million and overall net equity of \$20.27 million. The VEC's assets are largely comprised of the Election Management System (EMS), the Funding and Disclosure system, enhancements to VEC enterprise platforms, ongoing investment in election infrastructure, cyber security, and election inventory including PPE.

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

OPERATIONAL AND BUDGETARY OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE AGAINST OBJECTIVES

The VEC has three performance measures that relate specifically to Budget Paper Number 3 (BP3) Service Delivery, in accordance with the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) FRDs. The following table (Figure 3) provides details of the output report provided by the VEC to the Government, including performance measures and targets for agreed outputs, and the actual performance results for the VEC over the full year ending 30 June 2021.

FIGURE 3: PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUDGETARY OBJECTIVES, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

	STATE ELECTIONS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND STATUTORY ELECTIONS, BY-ELECTIONS, POLLS AND ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEWS	LEGAL CHALLENGES TO VEC CONDUCT UPHELD	CHANGES TO ELECTOR DETAILS OR ADDITIONS TO THE VICTORIAN ENROLMENT REGISTER PROCESSED WITHIN SET TIMEFRAMES
2016-17 BP3 target	99	-	95%
2016-17 BP3 actual	96	-	99%
Variance	-3% ¹	0%	4% ²
2017-18 BP3 target	32	-	95%
2017-18 BP3 actual	27	-	82%
Variance	-16% ³	0%	-14% ⁴
2018-19 BP3 target	115	-	95%
2018-19 BP3 actual	117	-	97%
Variance	2%	0%	2%
2019-20 BP3 target	22	-	95%
2019-20 BP3 actual	23	-	100%
Variance	4.5%	0%	5%
2020-21 BP3 target	22	-	90%
2020-21 BP3 actual	10	-	100%
Variance	-55% ⁵	0%	10% ⁶

¹ The 2016-17 election events number is lower than the 2016-17 target due to the number of actual extraordinary vacancies in the Legislative Assembly and on local government tracking lower than projected for the 2016-17 reporting year.

² The 2016-17 full year actual is higher than the target due to a stronger focus on the highest value enrolment programs relating to the 2016 local government elections.

³ Less than anticipated number of local government vacancies to be filled by a countback. Additionally, a reduction to the number of liquor licensing polls conducted.

⁴ The VEC's enrolment campaign schedules were extended early in the reporting year due to the sudden insolvency of the VEC's mail services contractor and the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey. Enrolment turnaround times measured above 95% for key VEC electoral events.

⁵ The 2020 local government election program was only listed as 1 election event when in actual the VEC conducted elections for 76 individual councils. The delivery of 2020 local government elections has resulted in fewer by-elections and countbacks arising after the event.

⁶ The VEC introduced improvements to our scheduling and processing activities that ensured enrolment transactions are processed within set timeframes. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the VEC has successfully adapted, implementing working arrangements to support the processing of enrolment transactions throughout the reporting period.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Progress continued towards the goals of the VEC's strategic plan, Strategy 2023. The VEC's five-year goal is that it is change-ready and has the people, systems and relationships to make the most of its opportunities.

STRATEGY 2023 CREATED EIGHT AREAS OF FOCUS IN ORDER TO DELIVER ON THE VEC'S FIVE-YEAR GOAL:



PEOPLE

Create an environment that inspires our people to reach their full potential:

- Develop transformational leaders who build teams and empower people to recognise and respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.
- Recruit and develop our people against the key competencies and behaviours critical to our ongoing success.



DECISION-MAKING

Make smart decisions on time and by the book:

- Strengthen process and decision-making pathways to enable transparent, innovative and improved ways of working.
- Embed an evidence-based approach for all aspects of VEC operations.



TECHNOLOGY

Provide our people and Victorians with smart, safe technology that is value for money and easy to use:

- Implement the VEC IT Strategy, driving excellence in infrastructure, process, security, integration, digital tools and technological innovation.
- Realise opportunities to capture and use VEC knowledge to improve operations, inform plans and increase business intelligence.



RELATIONSHIPS

Learn from others outside the VEC about opportunities and challenges:

- Use existing and new networks to grow the VEC's evidence base.
- Grow relationships to maximise customer reach and opportunities for innovation.

FIGURE 4: VEC CORPORATE PLANNING FRAMEWORK



The current Strategy 2023 implementation plan includes 36 programs, projects and initiatives scheduled for commencement or completion from January 2020 to June 2021.

A total of 33 projects (92%) are either complete or on track towards their completion date. Three projects are still experiencing delay, due in part to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These delayed projects are expected to be successfully delivered in the next financial year.

This financial year marked the midpoint in the current strategic period and the end of the current monitoring and evaluation plan. The VEC undertook a mid-stream review which included:

- a refreshed scan of the external environment
- consideration of evidence of progress against the desired outputs and impacts of Strategy 2023

- consideration of the effectiveness of the flow from the Strategy 2023 goals and objectives into branch and individual workplans, and what more could be done here to make this flow more meaningful and
- alignment of sub-strategies including the IT Strategy, HR Strategy and others.

Some areas of particular focus were identified for the final two years of the strategic period – see page 21 for more information.

Many of the qualitative measures were sourced from two key staff surveys, the biennial Victorian Public Sector Commission’s (VPSC) People Matter Survey (PMS) and a second staff survey undertaken to assess the maturity of the VEC’s knowledge management practices against best practice benchmarks.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN (CONT)

The VEC participated in the Victorian Public Sector Commission’s People Matter Survey in June 2021, and the people impact measures below largely come from this extensive staff survey. A total of 78% of VEC staff participated. Overall, the survey showed significant improvements in employee satisfaction, employee engagement, psychosocial safety and change management.

PEOPLE

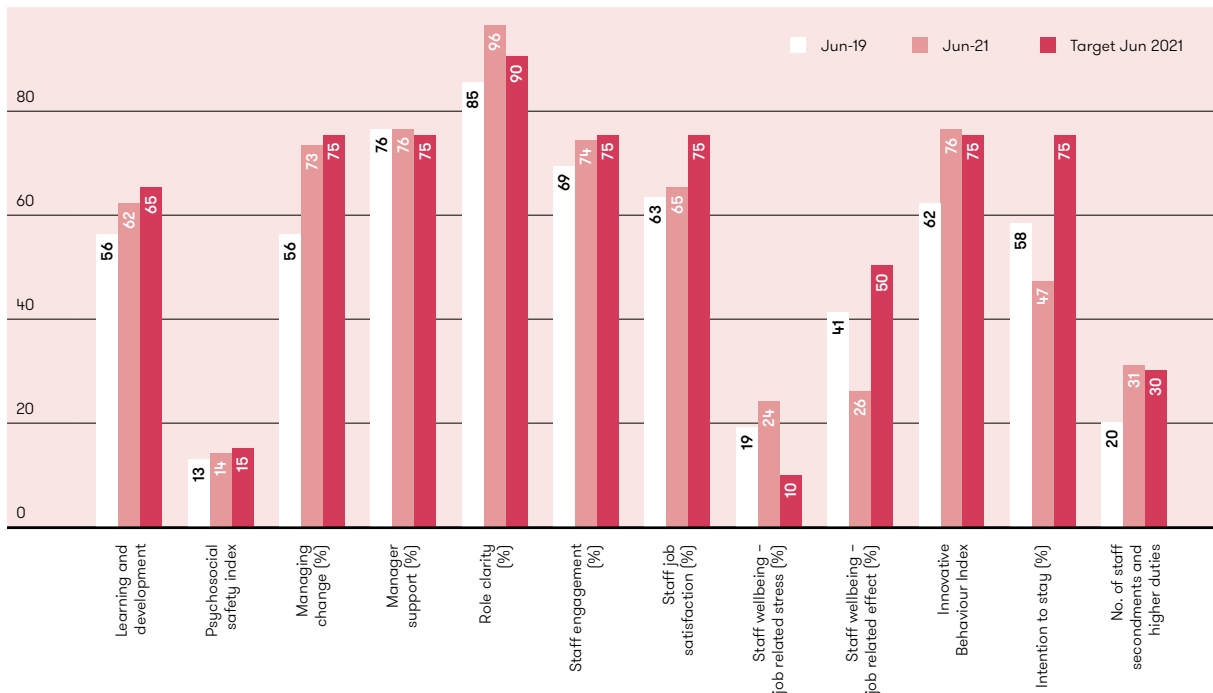
The key focus for this year has been delivering on the VEC’s commitment to building organisational capability through focused learning and development activities. The launch of the leadership development program- Leadership Excellence Accelerator Program (LEAP)- saw the first cohort of 35 learners across three tiers of the VEC’s leadership framework complete the first level of the learning journey. It is expected to be attended by around 50% of all VEC VPS staff.

This year, the VEC also launched two professional mentoring programs and key communities of practice (CoPs) to support its learning pathways.

These activities along with a focus on improved operational deliverables across the human resources portfolio has ensured the focus of the HR strategy is delivering to the VEC’s Strategy 2023 people commitments.

The past 12 months were a difficult time for people leaders at all levels of the organisation due to the challenges of remote working in the COVID-19 environment while successfully delivering the LG2020 elections. The VEC has continued to support people leaders to work proactively and flexibly in this new environment. The success of the LG2020 elections and remote working are themselves strong indicators of the successful transformational growth of the staff of the VEC at all levels and in all functions.

FIGURE 5: PEOPLE STATISTICS AS AT JUNE 2021



Impact indicators

The VEC participated in the Victorian Public Service Commission's People Matter Survey in June 2021; the people impact measures below largely come from this extensive staff survey. A total of 78% of VEC staff participated. Overall, the survey showed strong improvements in most areas of staff satisfaction over the past three years, with the strongest improvements measured in psychosocial safety; learning and development; innovative behaviour and secondments and higher duties opportunities.

Overall job satisfaction, staff wellbeing and stress indicators did not improve as planned, and intention to stay dropped. These are key factors that the VEC will work on for the remainder of the strategic period to June 2023.

TECHNOLOGY

The VEC's ongoing work in improving the technology security and risk posture of the organisation continued in FY2021.

Significant progress was made on a number of major IT developments including major development work on the VEC's Election Management System (EMS) and Funding and Disclosure system. The new VEC website went live in August 2020 and a new complaints management system was developed and launched ahead of the LG2020 elections.

Work also continued to support the adoption of the VEC's new intranet and electronic document management system (EDRMS), Electra, and other collaboration tools designed to improve knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Impact indicators

The technology impact indicators are twofold: some focus on security and risk, while others look at user experience.

Security and risk

The VEC successfully delivered all actions related to a detailed internal audit undertaken in 2018. Resolution of these action items took a three-year program and a focused effort from the IT Branch.

The systems, security and business continuity readiness risks did not meet the desired June 2021 target despite comprehensive work being done in all three areas. This was partially due to a deeper understanding of the organisation's risk profile in these areas and also due to changing external factors. Work continues to reassess the VEC's risk appetites and tolerances in light of the achievements in this area.

Work continued to further improve the VEC's cyber and information security posture, including further enhancement to the cloud environment and ongoing work towards full compliance with the Australian Signals Directorate's (ASD) Essential Eight security controls. While the impact metric indicates a position of 7/8, the VEC is assessed as being almost fully compliant, with the exception of one element of one ASD control which cannot be resolved until the completion of a major IT development currently underway.

The VEC reached its target of a Microsoft Secure Score (an independently measured security metric) of more than 50% by June 2021. The VEC's Secure Score places the Commission as a high-performing organisation compared to other organisations similar to the VEC, whose average performance is around 37%.

The final security and risk target, Microsoft Azure Score, was another industry metric which showed the relative 'health' of the VEC IT systems held in the Microsoft Azure cloud. However, Microsoft no longer believe this score is an accurate measure of resources health. Consequently, the VEC retired this score as a strategic measure.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN (CONT)

User experience

The Electra Net Promoter Score, an internal measure of user experience of the VEC’s intranet and EDRMS, did not reach its June 2021 target. This important user experience measure is also an indicator of productivity and knowledge sharing. Work will continue in the next financial year to improve user experience, particularly in the areas of document search and library navigation.

The June 2021 target for the Microsoft Productivity score was exceeded; this is a measure of how users communicate and collaborate.

The June 2021 target for SharePoint site usage, an indicator of user adoption of the new EDRMS, was not met. The VEC is steady at a score of 11,000 page views per day against an original target of 12,000. This metric has not proven to be very useful and will be retired in favour of a more complex Net Promoter Score.

Teams channel usage is steady at around 40 channel messages/day compared to the original target of 100. However, usage reached almost 110 channel messages per day in the lead-up to LG2020, when the VEC was at peak operational activity. Again, now that the adoption of the new tools has been achieved, this metric will be retired in favour of a more complex Net Promoter Score.

The VEC’s knowledge management maturity was assessed by an external organisation in December 2020 and was found to have exceeded the June 2021 target of 22/28 elements at 3 (Formative) or above according to ISO 30401 – Knowledge Management Systems.

Specifically, technology as a knowledge management enabler was assessed as 3 (Formative) against a June 2021 target of 4 (Operational). This is likely due to staff becoming more aware of their skill gaps on the new tools. The VEC will continue to work on knowledge management maturity in support of ongoing innovation and knowledge sharing.

DECISION-MAKING

The Corporate Compliance Framework was implemented in June 2021. Focus is now on implementing practices that will drive governance and accountability measures across the organisation.

Progress on the Electoral Compliance Framework is on track for delivery in December 2021.

The Sustainability Action Plan is being revisited with the intent of aligning more strongly with the Victorian Government Social Procurement Strategy.

FIGURE 6: TECHNOLOGY – SECURITY AND RISK STATISTICS AS AT JUNE 2021

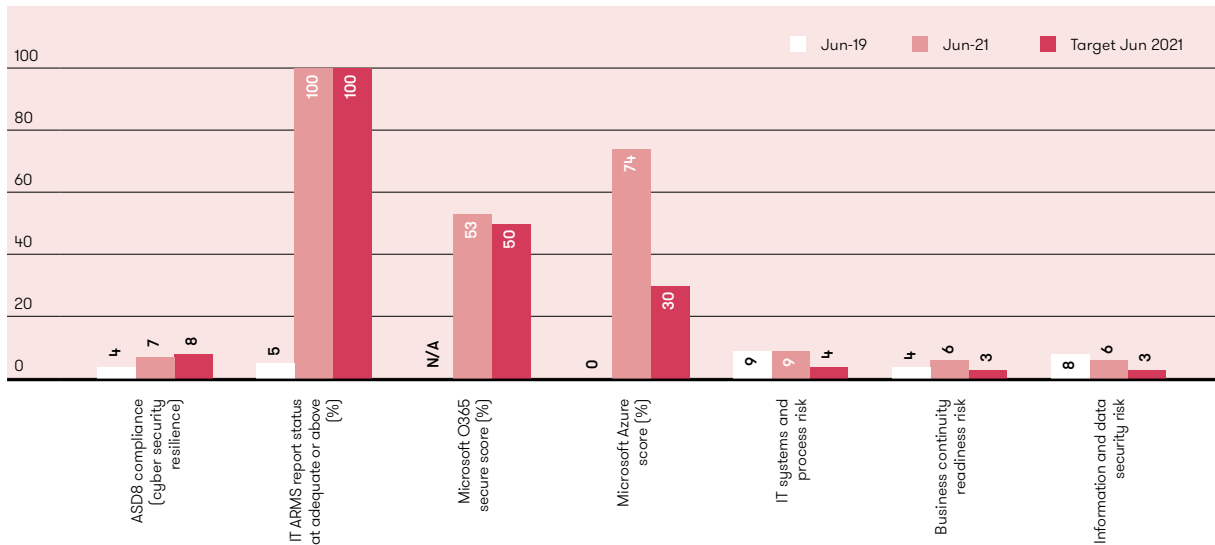


FIGURE 7: TECHNOLOGY – USER EXPERIENCE STATISTICS AS AT JUNE 2021

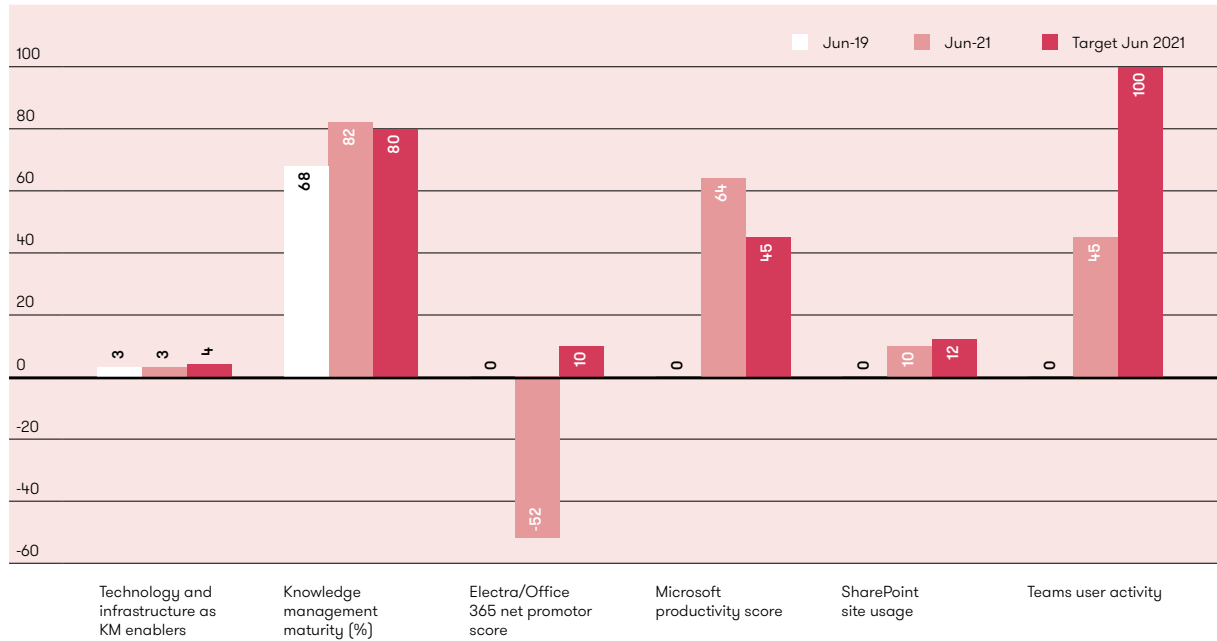
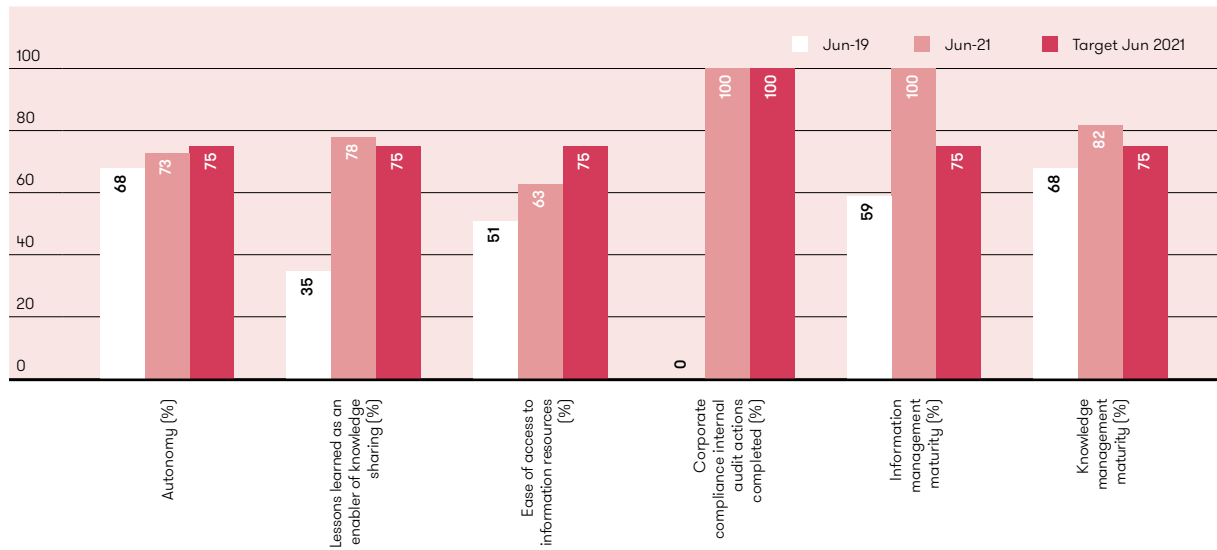


FIGURE 8: DECISION-MAKING STATISTICS AS AT JUNE 2021



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN (CONT)

Impact indicators

The current decision-making outcome indicators focus on the VEC's approach to continuous improvement via lessons learned, access to information and knowledge, and corporate compliance and governance maturity.

The VEC's Information Management maturity audit in December 2020 reported that the VEC exceeded its June 2021 targets for both information management maturity and knowledge management maturity. The audit also indicated that the VEC had improved its use of lessons learned as an enabler of knowledge sharing, also exceeding the June 2021 target.

A desire for more IT skills was seen to be the greatest barrier to effective knowledge sharing. The VEC will continue to improve its information management maturity for the remainder of the strategic period to June 2023.

All corporate compliance internal audit actions were completed successfully before June 2021, meeting the June 2021 target ahead of schedule.

Staff autonomy as measured by the 2021 People Matter Survey showed a steady performance since 2019, narrowly missing the June 2021 target by 2 percentage points.

RELATIONSHIPS

The VEC's new Diversity and Inclusion Framework was embedded across the organisation through action plans addressing the inclusion needs of young people, people living with disabilities and multicultural communities.

Consultations have also begun for action plans to improve engagement with people experiencing homelessness, prisoners and Aboriginal communities. Once finalised, impact measures from these plans will feed into the monitoring and evaluation framework for Strategy 2023.

The inaugural meeting of the new Aboriginal Advisory Group was held in June 2021. Group members will bring a strong focus to the development of the Aboriginal Inclusion Plan and ensure the VEC is guided by the organisation's recently published Statement on Self-determination Policy for Aboriginal Victorians.

The VEC launched a new Online Research Panel to provide a mechanism through which customer focus can be embedded into the VEC's work.

The VEC also endorsed a new Stakeholder Management Framework and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy in November 2020. These documents provide a principles driven approach to managing both internal and external stakeholder relationships to ensure a more consistent approach across the organisation.

The VEC was also a strong supporter of the ERRN program. See Research and Development on page 69 for more information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2021-23

Recognising that progress from 2018 to 2021 had been significant in a number of areas, the VEC has set three broad areas of focus for the remainder of the 2018-23 strategic period, noting that the 2022 State Election is a key legislative priority during this time.

Inspired people

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

As an employer of choice, we will create an environment that inspires our people to reach their full potential. Our skilled workforce will have an innovation mindset and be equipped for the challenges ahead. Our people will embrace change as 'business as usual'.

Our priorities

- Capability development and learning and development
- Trusted leadership at all levels
- Innovation and new ways of working
- Continuous learning environment and reflective practice
- Diversity and inclusion initiatives

Empowered electors

Our services are relevant, accessible and inclusive, and place electors at the centre of everything we do

We are an outward-looking organisation, attuned to the needs of electors. We will learn from and work with Victorian communities to improve access for all Victorians through secure, smart and technology-enabled services. Electors will have service choice, control and confirmation to the standard they expect, now and into the future.

Our priorities

- Accessible, elector-centric services with a strong focus on user experience standards
- Integrity and trust in our services and the electoral system
- Stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships

Smart solutions

VEC's systems and processes are sustainable, enabling and continually improving

Our business practices will be efficient, sustainable and transparent, and our conduct will support trust and confidence in Victoria's democracy. We will make smart decisions, on time and by the book, and make intelligent use of information and resources to solve problems and improve services. Our technology will help drive continuous improvement and enable our team to deliver seamlessly.

Our priorities

- Data and research-driven continuous improvement
- Data-driven planning and decision-making
- Business sustainability
- Secure, trusted and resilient technology
- Embedding electoral and corporate compliance controls

Jane Kyle

Election Systems
Administrator

Elections Branch



Jane Kyle (centre)
with her family (from
left) Damon, Rueben,
Josie and Lilly

“*We are all working to create a system for now and into the future.*”

THE VEC’S VISION IS FOR ALL VICTORIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR DEMOCRACY. HOW DOES YOUR ROLE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

One of my key roles has been to establish the voting centres for the state election. There are a lot of factors to consider but ultimately it all relates back to the electors. We consider suitability of the venue; accessibility of the venue and areas of population growth where extra voting is needed. We are trying to ensure that all electors have every opportunity to vote.

WHAT MAKES THE VEC AN INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING PLACE TO WORK?

I am part of a team working on the redevelopment of the Election Management System. I work with business stakeholders, developers, testers, business analysts and project managers. We are all working to create a system for now and into the future.

DURING 2020–21, THE VEC CONDUCTED THE 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS. HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR ROLE?

COVID-19 affected my role in three ways. Firstly, the organisation had to all work remotely and so we had to learn to communicate and collaborate in new ways. Secondly, our physical environment had to change, particularly with our election offices. We needed to cater to social distancing requirements, the addition of PPE resources, extra staffing and resources.

Lastly, the impact of the public being in isolation and needing to contact the election office by phone created unforeseen demand on our phone network. This needed constant monitoring and adjusting.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?

I am a wife and mother of three semi-adult children and enjoy our time when we are all together no matter whether it is camping, hiking or simply cooking dinner together. I also need my quiet personal time and that involves pottering in my garden and sewing my ‘me-made wardrobe’

Our commission

ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21



Delivered 76 local government elections in October 2020 and compulsory voting services for 75 council elections, meeting service plan performance targets.



Prepared and delivered election reports and invoices for 76 councils by April 2021.



Prepared a comprehensive election report on the conduct of the 2020 local government [LG2020] elections to be tabled in Parliament in the 2021-22 financial year.



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

OUTLOOK 2021-22



Planning and conducting the elections for South Gippsland Shire Council in October 2021.



Continuing work on a new Roll Management System.



Continuing preparations for the 2022 State election including early workforce and program planning.

GOVERNANCE

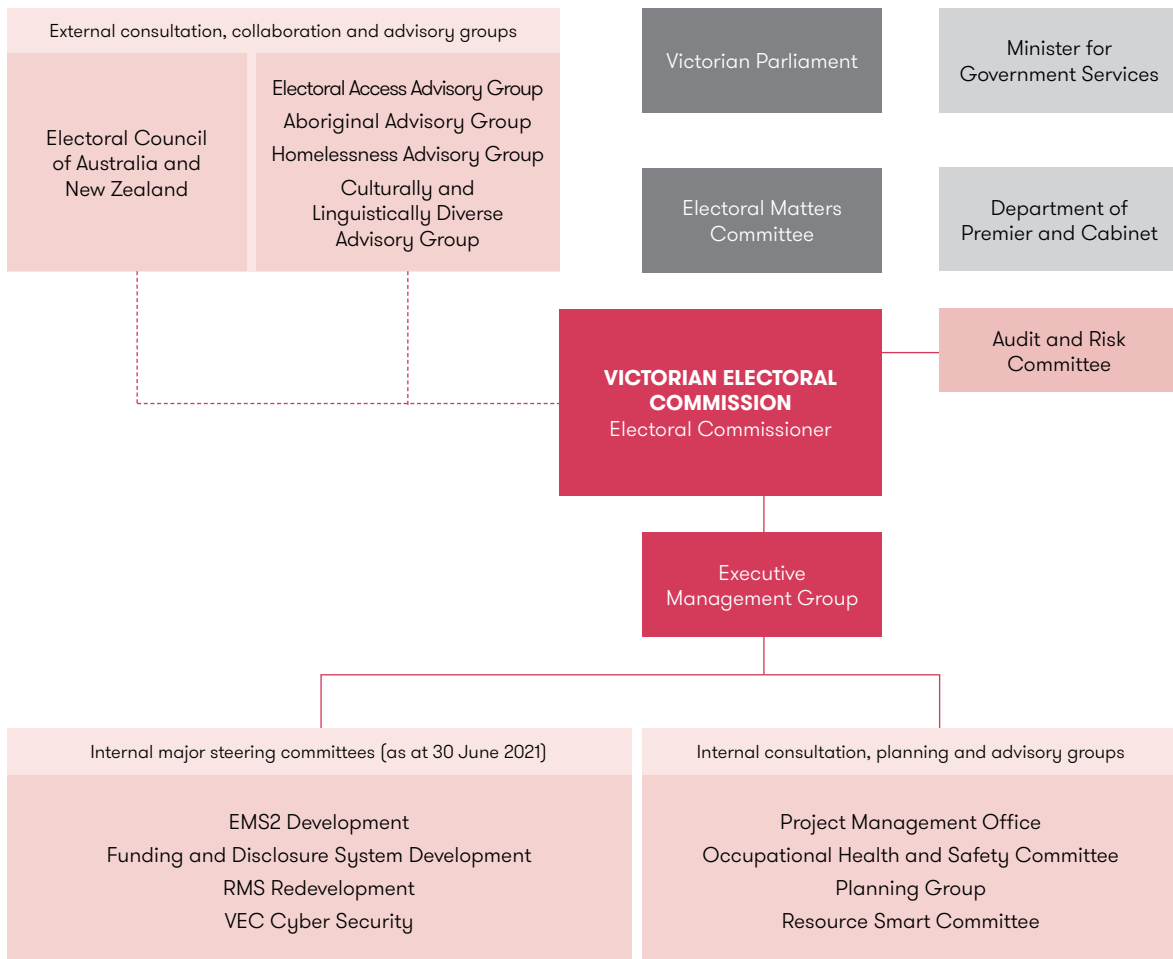
The VEC is the administrative agency through which the Electoral Commissioner’s legislative obligations are exercised. The VEC is committed to ensuring its policies and practices reflect good governance and comply with relevant legislation. Adherence to the governance framework demonstrates accountability to stakeholders and ensures the vitality and impartiality of the electoral system, now and into the future. Staffing and work practices are determined by the *Public Administration Act 2004* and guided by the VPSC.

The VEC is an independent agency operating under the auspices of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). The VEC is not subject to the direction or control of the relevant minister in respect to the performance of its responsibilities and functions, or the exercise of its powers.

The Hon. Danny Pearson MP, Minister for Government Services, has responsibility for the Electoral Act.

The Secretary of the DPC, Jeremi Moule, is responsible for providing support to the Premier and Cabinet on matters relating to the VEC. The VEC thanks the Secretary for his assistance in conveying relevant information to Government on the operations of the VEC, particularly during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 9 (below) shows the governance and consultation structure of the VEC.

FIGURE 9: GOVERNANCE AND CONSULTATION STRUCTURE OF THE VEC

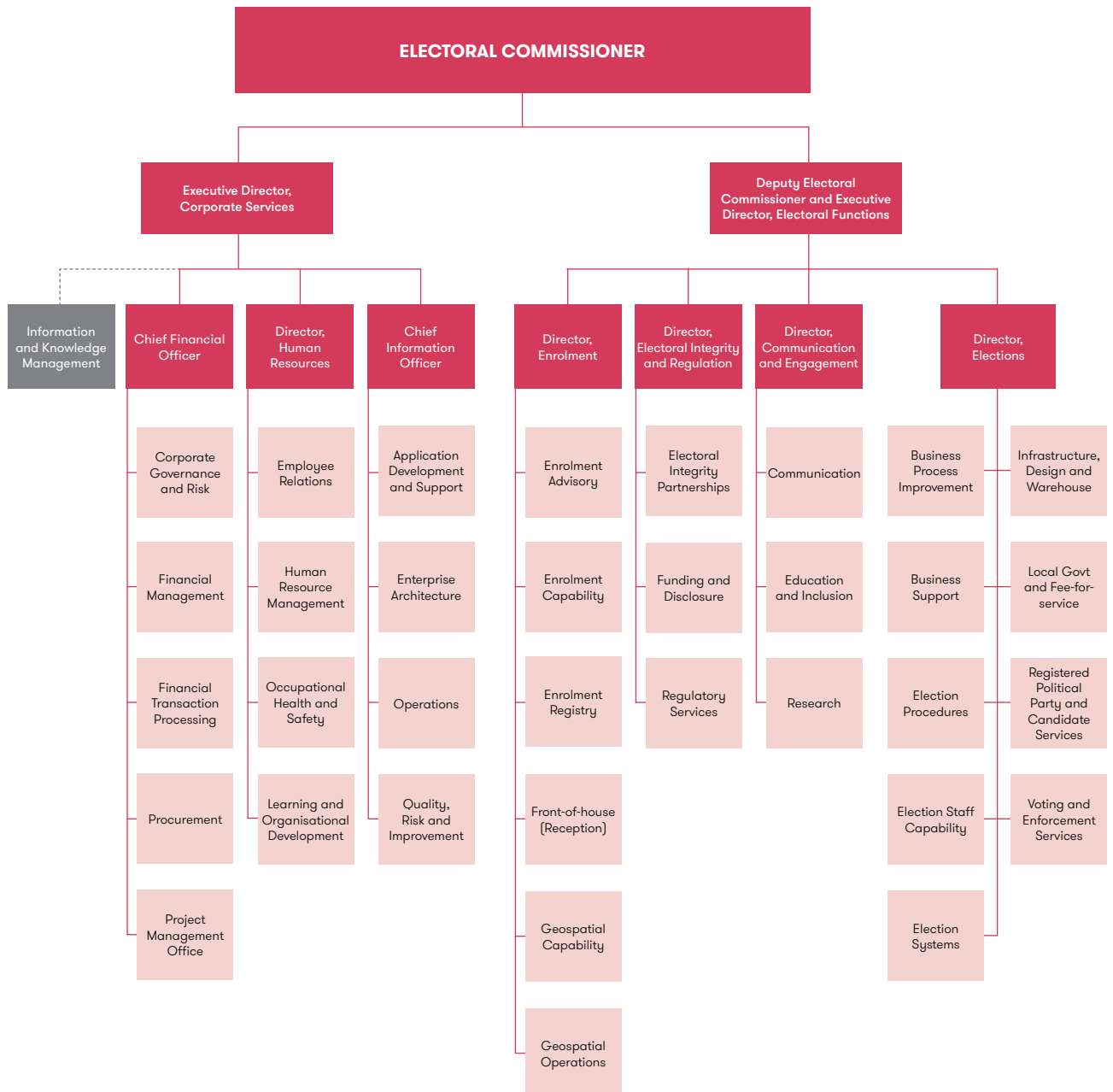


ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The VEC’s organisational structure reflects its main activity areas (see Figure 10).

The Executive Management Group (EMG) works closely with the Electoral Commissioner, the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and the Executive Director, Corporate Services to develop and implement strategic and operational plans.

FIGURE 10: VEC ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



THE OFFICE OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER



Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

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

Mr Warwick Gately AM was appointed as the Electoral Commissioner for Victoria on 29 April 2013.

Following an early career with the Royal Australian Navy, Warwick joined the Western Australian Electoral Commission as the Deputy Electoral Commissioner in 2003.

Subsequently appointed as the Electoral Commissioner in August 2006, he was responsible for the 2005, 2008 and 2013 State general elections and State-wide referendums on retail trading hours and daylight saving. He oversaw State electoral boundary reviews and conducted local government elections every two years. Continuing his longstanding career in public service, now as Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Warwick is committed to the provision of effective electoral services to the Victorian community, as evidenced by the 2014 and 2018 State elections.

The Electoral Commissioner, assisted by the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, is the Chief Executive Officer and remains responsible for all elements of the VEC's performance and compliance.



Liz Williams
Deputy Electoral Commissioner and Executive Director,
Electoral Functions (until 30 April 2021)

After 29 years of work at the VEC, 15 of those as Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Liz Williams retired on 30 April 2021.

As Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Liz worked closely with the Electoral Commissioner and the Executive Director, Corporate Services in the management and administration of the VEC. She also led the VEC's Electoral Functions Group, which has responsibility for the delivery of elections, enrolment services, communication and community engagement, and administration of Victoria's political funding and disclosure laws.

Liz has significant electoral experience gained in various roles since moving to the VEC from a career in education. She was appointed Deputy Electoral Commissioner in 2005 and was reappointed for a further term in 2015. Liz was Acting Electoral Commissioner between May 2012 and April 2013, and was appointed Executive Director, Electoral Functions in 2017.

Liz believes in fostering a working environment that promotes learning and collaboration to drive innovation and excellence; and that efficient and inclusive electoral processes are integral to full democratic participation.

THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT GROUP



Máiréad Doyle
Executive Director,
Corporate Services

As Executive Director, Corporate Services, Máiréad works closely with the Electoral Commissioner and Deputy Electoral Commissioner in the leadership and administration of the VEC. Máiréad's role as head of the Corporate Services Group encompasses Human Resources, Finance, Information Technology and Information Management, as well as corporate strategy, planning and governance. Her principal remit is to oversee and shape strategies, systems and policies to ensure the VEC's ongoing ability to respond to current and future requirements.

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

A Fellow of the Institute of Managers and Leaders, Máiréad is the recipient of the Governor-General's National Emergency Medal, the Australian Red Cross Meritorious Service Award and the New Zealand Red Cross Emergency Management Medal for her work in disasters.

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

Working cooperatively, the EMG sets the VEC's direction and delivers the operational, financial, workforce and other plans that underpin the efficient and effective delivery of electoral services to all Victorians. This is assisted through the professional mastery and experience contributed by each member. At regular intervals, the EMG considers the risks, issues and opportunities facing the VEC including succession planning and knowledge transfer, along with staff and system performance and productivity matters, and general compliance and reporting obligations. Staff wellbeing and development remains a high priority for the EMG.

THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT GROUP (CONT)



Sue Lang
Director

Sue joined the VEC in 2006 after spending much of her career within Victoria's public service in senior leadership roles at Maroondah City Council, Melbourne Water, South East Water, and Victoria's former Department of Infrastructure and the Department of Treasury and Finance. She has significant expertise in major public awareness and stakeholder engagement programs, crisis communication and digital communication techniques. Leading a high-functioning multi-disciplinary team, Sue's focus is on the delivery of research-based internal and external communication strategies using a program logic approach, aiming for increased public awareness and, where appropriate, behavioural change. Sue is an advocate of human-centred design for service, product and communication development.

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT BRANCH

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

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



Glenda Frazer
Director

Glenda commenced with the VEC in 1988 as an election manager, moving to a full-time position in 1995. With over 30 years' electoral experience, she has extensive knowledge of the conduct of elections. As well as being the VEC's Prosecution Officer for compulsory voting enforcement, Glenda is the program manager for State elections and is responsible for the planning and delivery of all elections conducted by the VEC.

ELECTIONS BRANCH

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

Key responsibilities include:

- election service agreements with Victoria's local councils, and contracts with statutory and fee-for-service clients
- development and maintenance of election procedures and instructional materials
- development and support of election systems
- recruitment and training of the VEC's pool of Senior Election Officials in preparation for appointment to election management roles
- large-scale recruitment, training and support programs for the VEC's temporary workforce of around 25,000 election appointees
- services to candidates including political party registration
- design, preparation, printing and distribution of election material
- operation of large-scale centralised operations for postal voting and computerised counts
- establishment of election office and early voting centre infrastructure
- appointment of election day voting centres
- management of the VEC warehouse
- compulsory voting enforcement.



Dahna Bond
Director

Dahna joined the VEC as Director, Enrolment in 2019. With a background in service delivery leadership roles across New Zealand and Victorian public service organisations, Dahna has extensive experience in managing large multi-functional service delivery teams in regulatory environments and leading service delivery transformation programs. Her leadership career has spanned different regulatory environments such as public housing, tenancy services, consumer affairs, education, building, employment and justice.

Dahna moved from Wellington to Melbourne in 2015 and has held senior leadership roles at the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria.

In her role as Director, Enrolment, Dahna is the Electoral Registrar and responsible for the establishment, maintenance and update of the Victorian register of electors, preparation of the electoral rolls, provision of enrolment information to political parties, members and candidates, and enrolment objections. She is also responsible for supporting local government structure and boundary reviews and State redivision review programs, which ensure the establishment of electoral structures that represent voters fairly.

ELECTORAL ENROLMENT BRANCH

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

- implementation of electoral enrolment programs
- conduct of electoral structure reviews for councils and support for electoral boundary work by the EBC
- production of electoral rolls, other roll products and mapping data
- provision of advice on electoral enrolment matters.



Keegan Bartlett
Director

Keegan joined the VEC in 2010 as a policy officer before moving to lead the VEC's local government and fee-for-service election programs in 2011.

In 2017, Keegan joined the EMG as Director, Enrolment and – after holding both roles for several months – moved to fill the new position of Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation full-time in 2019. The role brings together Keegan's electoral practice in Victoria with his background in Australia and New Zealand developing policies and relationships to promote good governance, a commitment to compliant practices and continuous improvement, and effective, transparent decision-making processes.

As Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation, Keegan provides expert advice and support to the Electoral Commissioner and across the organisation on key compliance, integrity, policy and regulatory matters, and leads the VEC's strategic engagements with other enforcement and integrity partners. He represents the VEC on national and state electoral compliance working groups and oversees the VEC's contributions to electoral law.

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY AND REGULATION BRANCH

The Electoral Integrity and Regulation Branch is responsible for administering the VEC's electoral compliance, enforcement and regulatory activities. The branch informs and supports the planning and delivery of the VEC's electoral functions to protect and enhance the integrity of Victoria's electoral processes.

The branch includes the VEC's Funding and Disclosure Unit and takes a coordinating role for disputes or litigation involving the Electoral Commissioner. The branch works closely with internal and external partners to perform these highly regulated activities.

THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT GROUP (CONT)



Binh Le
Chief Financial Officer

Binh joined the VEC in 2016 and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in finance, audit, governance and corporate management. A Fellow of the Institute of Public Accountants and graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Binh serves as a key member of the EMG, providing strategic leadership and advice on financial and corporate matters.

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

FINANCE AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE BRANCH

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

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



Angela Kelly
Director

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

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

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

HUMAN RESOURCES BRANCH

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

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

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



Jonathan Underwood
Chief Information Officer

Jonathan is a business-focused information technology leader with a demonstrated track record in partnering with stakeholders to deliver robust, secure, high-performing IT solutions.

Since commencing with the VEC in late 2017, he has developed an IT strategy and roadmap to deliver an information technology environment that supports secure IT delivery. The strategy has delivered cloud computing, application rationalisation, integration, information management, cyber security and a modern workplace.

Jonathan is a strong people leader who is motivated to solve problems and deliver high-quality results in complex situations. He believes integrity, professionalism and accountability are vital in the successful delivery of information technology.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BRANCH

The IT Branch supports the VEC's business systems and networks, ensuring a secure and resilient technology environment. Accountable for delivery of infrastructure and integrated applications for business and electoral activities, the IT Branch comprises:

- Operations – maintaining and delivering enterprise systems.
- DevOps – delivering cyber security and innovation in infrastructure and cloud computing.
- Application Development – transforming services by modernising and consolidating applications.
- Enterprise Architecture – designing the principles and practices for strategy execution.
- Quality Assurance – ensuring quality IT products and services.

INTERNAL COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

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

EMS2 DEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

Internal oversight and governance for the VEC's Election Management System (EMS) redevelopment program and EMS enhancement projects are provided by the EMS2 Development Steering Committee. The Committee meets monthly to ensure correct project controls are being applied to EMS redevelopment and enhancement projects – along with providing oversight of schedule, budget and risk. The Committee members are:

- Director, Elections (Chair)
- Chief Information Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Enterprise Architect.

The following are also attendees at each meeting:

- IT Program Manager
- Manager, Election Systems.

During 2020-21, the Committee was focused on ensuring the successful delivery of functionality to support election configuration and resourcing for elections, as well as functionality required to support the 2020 local government (LG2020) elections, much of which arose due to changes to legislation. Advancing delivery of the compulsory voting enforcement module and scoping of the requirements to support fee-for-service elections to complete the EMS2 redevelopment program was also a priority. The deliverables included:

- enhancements arising from new local government legislation
- the scoping of phase two of the election administration module
- the development of a new countback application
- development and enhancement of reports
- system stabilisation and disaster recovery enhancements.

FUNDING AND DISCLOSURE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

Internal oversight and governance for the development of Victoria's online political donation disclosure and reporting system, VEC Disclosures, is provided by the Funding and Disclosure System Development Steering Committee. The Committee meets regularly during peak periods of development to ensure correct project controls are being applied to VEC Disclosures, along with providing oversight of schedule, budget and risk. The Committee members are:

- Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation (Chair)
- Manager, Application Support and Development
- Manager, Education and Inclusion
- Manager, Geospatial Capability
- Manager, Voting and Enforcement Services.

During 2020-21, the Committee was focused on annual returns functionality and other priority enhancements, as well as supporting the VEC's Funding and Disclosure Unit to develop its business requirements for a longer-term development project leading into the 2022 State election.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC) is a forum that facilitates engagement and communication between the EMG and employees. The focus of the OHSC is the proactive support in those areas and issues likely to affect the health, safety and welfare of all staff in VEC workplaces in accordance with the requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

In 2020-21, the OHSC continued to monitor the VEC Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) functions and the delivery of health and wellbeing program activities.

Bi-monthly OHSC meetings were held over the year, including reviews of the hazard risk register, regular reviews of the safety action plans, identifying and implementing process improvements, and contributing to activities such as Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Month. Health and Safety Representatives continued with quarterly inspections and incident and hazard reviews.

The OHSC supported a significant program of work to close out internally audited areas, along with the safe delivery of the LG2020 elections. Emphasis was on building staff OHS capability to reduce risk exposure; increased onboarding and induction support in election offices; and the engagement of a Health and Safety Advisor and Infection Prevention and Control Advisor to support the delivery of the LG2020 elections. Significantly, the committee provided a spotlight on and support for staff throughout the elections in the areas of staff wellbeing, fatigue and incident management and response.

The OHSC members continue to work upstream and downstream providing insights and input into the wider VEC health and safety programs for their collective branches. The OHSC will continue to monitor the progress of the implementation of recommendations.

PLANNING GROUP

The Planning Group (PG) is the VEC's major cross-organisational work group that tracks and monitors the preparation and implementation of electoral events. The group comprises managers from across the organisation, is responsible for fostering intra-agency cooperation and reporting on event preparation and projects.

During 2020-21, PG's focus has primarily been on delivering the LG2020 elections.

Early in 2021, PG commenced planning for the delivery of the 2022 State election through a revised program structure to better deliver the election. Work is also advancing on the draft 2022 State election service plan for stakeholders to be delivered in late 2021.

This year, PG also focused on the delivery of other key electoral events including local government by-elections for Hindmarsh Shire Council and Northern Grampians Shire Council (two). A by-election for Cardinia Shire Council commenced during the financial year and is due to be completed in early August 2021. Several countbacks and fee-for-service and statutory elections were also conducted.

INTERNAL COMMITTEES AND GROUPS (CONT)

RESOURCE SMART COMMITTEE

Environmental sustainability report



The VEC's Resource Smart Committee (RSC) endeavoured to meet regularly, however was challenged during the year with COVID-19 constraints. Work continued in encouraging staff to be 'green conscious' and to adopt practices such as refusing plastic bags and opting to use reusable shopping bags. The RSC was also pleased to note the continued up-take of reusable coffee cups in place of disposable takeaway cups and drop in document printing volumes.

The constraints of COVID and the lack of staff on-site meant targeted 2020-21 initiatives could not be achieved. The RSC is dedicated to driving positive change within the workplace and will press forward with the following initiatives:

- drive resource efficiency and sustainable business practices throughout VEC operations
- leverage and influence VEC networks to improve sustainable performances and practices of the electoral sector
- prioritise sustainability in procurement and investment decisions and work with VEC suppliers to pursue and develop sustainable business outcomes
- build the capability and capacity of VEC staff to undertake their roles more sustainably, and actively communicate information to encourage and assist employees with sustainability
- implement a holistic and transparent sustainability strategy, including measurable targets where applicable, and publicly report on progress
- actively engage with Victorians to promote sustainability through electoral processes.

What's next for 2021-22?

The RSC is in the process of reassessing the Sustainability Action Plan 2023 with the intent of refining environmental and sustainability targets over the two years. This will take into consideration planning for the 2022 State election program and various procurement initiatives. The RSC will continue to promote sustainable practices within the workplace and look to recruit additional support from new VEC staff.

RMS REDEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

The RMS Redevelopment Steering Committee provides internal oversight and governance for the VEC's Roll Management System (RMS) redevelopment project. The Committee meets monthly to provide guidance to the project team and ensure adequate controls are applied across the project. This includes risk mitigation, budget expenditure, schedule tracking and quality of deliverables. The Committee members are:

- Deputy Electoral Commissioner (Chair, until April 2021)
- Executive Director, Corporate Services (Chair, from April 2021)
- Chief Financial Officer
- Director, Elections
- Director, Enrolment
- Chief Information Officer.

The following are additional attendees at each meeting:

- Manager, Project Management Office
- RMS Product Owner
- RMS Project Manager.

During 2020-21, the Committee was focused on the successful initiation and planning of the project, ensuring an appropriate design and adequate resourcing to deliver a new Roll Management System solution, which will meet the demands of the VEC and its stakeholders for the future.

EXTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS

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

The VEC has four active community advisory groups:

- Aboriginal Advisory Group
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Advisory Group
- Electoral Access Advisory Group
- Homelessness Advisory Group.

All groups met separately once this year and were involved in a combined feedback workshop on the 2020 local government (LG2020) elections. These meetings were held online due to COVID-19 restrictions. Members also supported the VEC by providing expert advice to inform the development of the Multicultural Inclusion Plan (MIP), Young People Inclusion Plan and the Out-of-Home Inclusion Plan, with preliminary input provided for work beginning on the development of the Aboriginal Inclusion Plan.

The VEC would like to thank all advisory group members for their extraordinary commitment, time and advice during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and restrictions.

ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP

The VEC recruited new members for its lapsed Aboriginal Advisory Group. This group comprises nine highly respected Aboriginal elders and leaders from across Victoria. The VEC will be working with this group ensuring the VEC's Statement on Self-determination Policy is embedded in the planning and ongoing implementation and evaluation of all electoral engagement initiatives which target Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE ADVISORY GROUP

The CALD Advisory Group comprises representatives from multicultural organisations across community and government sectors, and those with expertise in engaging CALD communities. This year, members provided expert insight and advice on the development of the VEC's first Multicultural Inclusion Plan (MIP). Members also provided important feedback on outreach projects developed for the LG2020 elections, which were well received by the public.

ELECTORAL ACCESS ADVISORY GROUP

The Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG) comprises representatives of disability support agencies, people with disabilities and their supporters. Members of the group were consulted on Easy English worksheets to support people with disability to enrol and vote, and other outreach strategies for the LG2020 elections. Ensuing advice ensured the VEC was able to promote and run voter education sessions across Specialist Disability Accommodation via remote video links during the elections.

Members also received reports on:

- progress against the VEC Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-23
- electoral outreach highlights from the LG2020 elections and Democracy Ambassador online sessions
- initiatives that are in the development phase towards the 2022 State election.

HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY GROUP

The Homelessness Advisory Group comprises practitioners from the homelessness sector, peer support workers and people with lived experience of homelessness. Members of the Group provided advice on outreach materials, homelessness sector networks and a best-practice approach to engaging with people experiencing homelessness. Members also attended the joint advisory group meeting in December 2020 and provided valuable feedback on LG2020 election activities. The Group also provided guidance and expertise on the development of the Out-of-Home Inclusion Plan.

LG2020 MYTH BUSTING CAMPAIGN – REACHING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Due to the restrictions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the VEC had to create adaptive and innovative ways of supporting voters with insecure housing. Along with closures of homelessness services, the pandemic made VEC 'traditional' outreach activities to services impossible for the LG2020 elections.

Offering electoral education in an online format can be effective in reaching some community groups; however, for people experiencing homelessness, this was not the case. These people have a range of additional barriers and limited access to technology. As a result, the VEC needed to explore new and creative strategies to reach them.

With the guidance of industry group members, the VEC focused its communication to people experiencing homelessness through non-digital methods. Old-school marketing using street posters, billboards and wallet-sized z-cards were used for a Myth Busting campaign. The aim of this project was to use street posters and billboards to challenge the myths that surround enrolment and voting and included myths related to local council responsibilities and the 'no fixed address' enrolment option.

Building ongoing partnerships with sector organisations and thinking 'outside the box' was crucial to the Myth Busting campaign. Along with street signage, the VEC produced z-cards addressing the myths about enrolment and voting. The 1500 z-cards were packaged with No Fixed Address enrolment forms and distributed by services including Street Smart, Star Health, Windana, Eastern Homeless Network, the Medically Supervised Injecting Room and Sacred Heart Mission. The VEC also promoted its 1800 freecall enquiry phone number, which was set up specifically for people experiencing homelessness.

The project ran from July to late September and covered 30 suburbs and 10 local government areas. There was also an unexpected presence of the Myth Busting campaign on social media with one community organisation producing a video of the posters around the City of Port Phillip, with over 2000 views on Facebook. The Myth Busting street posters and billboards were placed in over 100 locations across Melbourne and seen by over 2.96 million passers-by. This campaign reached the VEC's target group of people experiencing homelessness, with the added benefit of also reaching the mainstream community.



GOVERNING LEGISLATION AND TRIBUNALS

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

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

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY AMENDMENTS

Prompted by the passage of the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) earlier in the year, new Local Government (Electoral) Regulations and updates to the City of Melbourne (Electoral) Regulations 2012 were made in August 2020. These regulations were amended in September to include temporary provisions to align with State and Commonwealth Government directions to minimise or stop the spread of COVID-19.

The LG2020 election program was conducted under the LGA 2020 and the COVID-19 related amendments. These amendments allowed the VEC to process candidate nominations electronically and enabled election managers to determine the maximum number of scrutineers that may be present at any location to ensure adherence to social distancing rules. Technical changes were also made to the regulations to clarify the provisions that allow the deadlines for close of voting and postal vote receipt to be extended, if necessary.

VICTORIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL

The Administrative Division, Review and Regulation List of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hears administrative reviews of VEC decisions made under the *Electoral Act 2002*, as well as disputes to local government elections. VCAT previously heard local government election disputes in its review jurisdiction, until the Municipal Electoral Tribunal (MET) was repealed by the LGA 2020.

In August 2020, VCAT accepted the VEC's request for an application to review an earlier decision by the MET to be summarily dismissed. The application concerned the Whittlesea City Council, South-East Ward election held in October 2016, and the MET had heard and dismissed the dispute under the *Local Government Act 1989*. VCAT dismissed the application on the basis that it was vexatious, misconceived and lacked substance, particularly given the Whittlesea City Council had since been dismissed. Therefore as the VEC had submitted, none of the orders sought by the applicant could be made.

From the LG2020 elections, VCAT became responsible for hearing disputes on the validity of local government elections in its original jurisdiction under section 311 of the LGA 2020. Applications for a review of the declaration of the results of an election must be lodged within 14 days of the election and can be made by a candidate in the election, 10 persons who were entitled to vote at the election, or the VEC.

There were nine applications to VCAT following the LG2020 elections, including one application brought by the VEC in relation to the Moreland City Council, North-West Ward election (see below). The various applications asserted issues with candidate behaviour, misleading election material, voting system integrity or irregularities, and incorrect advice about election procedures. Several applications sought recounts while others sought, at least initially, for the relevant election to be declared void. Five applications did not proceed to a substantive hearing, as they were withdrawn following directions, and four applications (concerning three separate elections) remain active.

Moreland City Council, North-West Ward election

During the LG2020 elections, the VEC identified evidence of possible interference in the postal voting process for the Moreland City Council, North-West Ward election. Alert VEC staff and standard procedures highlighted a higher incidence of multiple returns for many addresses within the North-West Ward. As required by legislation, multiple returns were reviewed to determine which ballot paper envelopes were to be accepted or rejected from the count. The VEC compared signatures on the suspect ballot paper envelopes and found that the person who signed the declaration on the general mail-out voting package did not appear to be the voter.

The matter was referred to the Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) and Victoria Police, although the VEC was required by law to continue the election and declare the result as soon as practical. Immediately after the North-West Ward election results were declared, the VEC lodged an application to VCAT for an inquiry into the election. Both the VCAT application and the Victoria Police investigation are still ongoing.

Once these matters have been closed, the VEC intends to meet with relevant election stakeholders, including Local Government Victoria (LGV) and the LGI, to consider the strategic and operational implications of the outcomes on postal voting processes.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

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

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

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

- David Nairn, Chairman (independent member)
- Carol Pagnon (independent member – concluded 25 March 2021)
- Michael Ulbrick (independent member – extended to August 2021)
- Taryn Rulton (independent member – commenced 15 June 2021)

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

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

The Committee met formally on four occasions during the year, including twice online. The Committee's positive support and guidance to the Electoral Commissioner were much appreciated, with its focus on risk and business continuity proving timely.

COMPLAINTS AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK FRAMEWORK AND POLICY

The VEC handles complaints in three main areas. These include complaints that:

- allege a breach of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act)
- allege a breach of the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020)
- are about a process, performance or service related to an interaction with the VEC.

As the VEC does not have authority to follow up allegations of a breach of the LGA 2020, it forwards these complaints to the LGI in accordance with an established protocol.

During 2020-21, the VEC undertook a pilot program to implement and test a new Customer Feedback Framework and Policy, which streamlines how it receives and handles feedback and complaints from the public.

For the LG2020 elections, the VEC established a dedicated complaints team to handle all complaints received in writing. The complaints handling process was developed in consultation with local councils and the LGI. This was the first major election event where customers were able to provide feedback and complaints through an online submission form.

The VEC received 2,250 written complaints during 2020-21. Of these, complaints, 2,087 were related to the LG2020 elections and received during the election period, 13 July through 27 November 2020. For complaints in this period, 1.5% (28 cases) were referred to relevant councils as they related to local laws. Another 11% (218 cases) were referred to the LGI as they related to possible breaches of the LGA 2020.

Of all the LG2020 elections complaints received, 63% came via the online submission form. This reduced the amount of hard copy complaints received via post, which accounted for 1% of complaints received in 2020, compared to 19% in 2016.

A total of 850 cases related to interactions with or the behaviour of candidates, specifically related to nominations and campaigning in a COVID-19 environment. This included allegations concerning advertising, misleading electoral material and qualifications of candidates. Where the pandemic was concerned, these cases were resolved by clarifying the impact of the directives of the Premier of Victoria.

Another 712 cases related to postal voting, including the method for voting in a COVID-19 environment, ballot packs and the voting process.

During the LG2020 elections, the VEC received 220 pieces of feedback or suggestions for improvement, along with 19 compliments. Only three customers sought a formal reassessment of their case.

There were no complaints related to a council by-election or countback during 2020–21.

Complaints received that were not connected to an election event included those related to legislation (5), enrolment and the register of electors (13), VEC administration or processes (19), the VEC website and VoterAlert (26). Two complaints were received regarding council boundaries and the electoral representation review program. A further four complaints concerned political party registrations and one was in relation to campaign donation returns.

As the regulator of allegations of a breach of the Electoral Act, the VEC investigated and resolved 51 cases relating to the authorisation and/or distribution of electoral matter. This included 10 relating to campaigns regarding the Premier of Victoria and COVID-19 and 34 relating to the distribution of material by MPs. One additional case concerning the integrity of the 2018 State election was resolved.

The VEC received 15 complaints related to information privacy, or the release of information under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic). The VEC reminded electors who suspected their privacy was breached that the VEC has obligations under the legislation to provide candidates, political parties and Members of Parliament with electoral rolls for purposes including campaigning. More information about who receives enrolment information is available at ‘Privacy at the Victorian Electoral Commission’ on the VEC website.

The VEC dealt with all complaints in accordance with its procedures. Complaints were resolved through providing an explanation, follow-up and responsive action where required. The VEC is committed to responding to simple complaints within five working days or providing an update to complex complaints after 10 working days. The average response time was six working days.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

The VEC’s Customer Service Charter ensures that the organisation complies with best practice customer service and is relevant to VEC operations. The Charter is reviewed regularly and is available on the VEC’s website.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY (CONT)

CORPORATE REPORTING

The VEC has a comprehensive program of stakeholder reporting that supports its goals of accountability and transparency. Internal reporting is aligned with lines of authority and cross-organisational channels to meet organisational needs.

External reporting is based on legislative and governance obligations, transparency objectives and commitments to stakeholders. The standard of reporting is high. For example, last year's Annual Report fully complied with the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) model report requirements and achieved a Gold award at the 2021 Australasian Reporting Awards.

During 2020-21, the VEC tabled one report in Parliament: the *Victorian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2019-20*.

Other reporting obligations include:

- the provision of a quarterly report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) in relation to budgetary objectives and impact of COVID-19
- monthly financial reporting to the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF)
- twice-yearly reporting to the Attorney-General on infringements activity
- advertising campaign reporting
- reporting for the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC), for which the VEC provides secretarial services and technical support. The VEC also prepares an annual report for the EBC. This report can be found at Appendix I.
- An annual attestation to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, on the progress of activities identified in the VEC Protective Data Security Plan (PDSP)
- An annual report to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner on the number and outcomes of freedom of information requests.

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

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK

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

The FMCF Standing Directions cover:

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

The VEC's compliance with the FMCF Standing Directions is assessed by the internal auditor annually and is reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee. The 2020-21 internal review reported the VEC's overall compliance with the Framework in the annual attestation to DTF.

IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING RISK

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

Risk management is embedded in the VEC's operations, including in regular workshops and assessments to identify and monitor organisational risks, evaluating existing risk controls and developing new controls where required. The VEC's risk practice is managed through an integrated enterprise risk system, with regular reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee, which oversees risk management and provides an independent perspective on the VEC's practices.

Risks are profiled and rated according to their potential hazard level across operational and non-operational activities. The Audit and Risk Committee will independently assess and determine whether risks are adequately scoped, and whether sufficient controls are in place to mitigate and manage risks.

At an operational level, the VEC has comprehensive risk management plans for all electoral events and major projects. These are developed, discussed and analysed at branch level and at election planning groups during the planning phase and cover areas such as election management, infrastructure, communication, recruitment and information technology.

INTERNAL AUDIT

The VEC's internal audit program is designed to provide an independent, objective assurance to improve operations. The rolling four-year internal audit strategy and program is designed to be comprehensive and to enable effective and regular review of all operational, financial and related activities.

Part of the annual program includes annual attestations and certification reviews, such as Risk and Fraud Certification and compliance with Memorandums of Understandings entered into with other agencies. The VEC's internal audit program is reviewed annually and designed in consultation with the Audit and Risk Committee and the EMG.

In addition to standing items, internal audits this year covered compulsory voting processes, stakeholder management, complaints management and information and knowledge management. The audits each revealed matters and recommendations of medium-to-low risk to the VEC and requiring operational attention.

DISCLOSURES

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Information relating to the 2020-21 reporting period is made available to Ministers, Members of Parliament and the public on request (subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* [FOI Act]) and is listed in Appendix C.

ADVERTISING DISCLOSURE

FRD 22D issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board requires Victorian Government agencies to disclose advertising expenditure on campaigns with a media spend of \$150,000 or greater. The VEC spent just over \$644,000 on a Statewide advertising campaign for the LG2020 elections and \$700,000 on the associated statutory campaign.

ATTESTATION TO PUBLIC SECTOR STANDARDS COMMISSIONER

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

BUILDING ACT 1993

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

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

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

The Commission for Children and Young People determined that the VEC is required to comply with the Child Safe Standards, primarily due to its work in student civics education. Throughout 2020-21, the VEC has continued to support the application of the Child Safety Standards across the breadth of the work conducted.

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

CONSULTANCIES AND CONTRACTS

Major contracts

In accordance with the requirements of FRD 12A, the VEC disclosed all contracts greater than \$10 million in value entered into during the year ended 30 June 2021. No contracts greater than \$10 million in value were entered into by the VEC during 2020-21.

CONSULTANCY EXPENDITURE

Details of consultancies under \$10,000

In 2020-21, 16 consultancies were engaged where the total fees payable to the individual consultants was less than \$10,000. The total expenditure incurred in relation to these consultancies was \$62,396 (excluding GST).

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

In 2020-21, there were 19 consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants was \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred in relation to these consultancies was \$1,281,779 (excluding GST). See Figure 11.

DISABILITY ACT 2006

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

DISCLOSURE INDEX

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

EMPLOYMENT AND CONDUCT PRINCIPLES

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

FIGURE 11: CONSULTANCIES VALUED AT \$10,000 OR GREATER

CONSULTANT	PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT FEE (EX GST)	EXPENDITURE 2020-21 (EX GST)	FIXTURE EXPENDITURE (EX GST)
Arkade Digital Pty Ltd	Passport to Democracy website refresh	10,353	10,353	-
BMM Australia Pty Ltd – TestLabs	Evaluation of VEC’s updated count application – countback	25,340	25,340	-
Clayton Utz	Legal advisory services	349,389	325,154	24,235
Cube Group Management Consulting	Strategy review	42,395	42,395	-
Data#3	IT network and security consulting	29,098	29,098	-
Deloitte Consulting Pty Ltd	Website strategy and design	282,606	282,606	-
Dr Dominic Yong	COVIDSafe plan review	17,942	17,942	-
Grange Advisory Pty Ltd	HR review services	12,929	12,929	-
Herbert Smith Freehills	Legal advisory services	19,724	12,224	7,500
ID (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd	Elector forecasts	187,860	187,860	-
KPMG Australia	Compliance audit	24,840	24,840	-
Leba Advertising (Aust) Pty Ltd	Translations of 2020 local government elections media releases	47,230	47,230	-
Mapdojo	Interactive map design	18,200	12,600	5,600
OOBE Pty Ltd	Azure IAAS security assessment	21,600	21,600	-
Quantum Market Research (Aust) P/L	Market research	125,205	125,205	-
Reconciliation Victoria	Reconciliation Victoria LG2020 videos	45,000	45,000	-
Robert Masters & Associates	General counsel and editorial services	22,470	22,470	-
The LOTE Agency	Translation services	11,884	11,884	-
The Social Research Centre	Non-voter research project	25,049	25,049	-

DISCLOSURES (CONT)

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

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

The VEC's Environmental Sustainability Report for 2020-21 is included in 'Our Commission'.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER DISCLOSURES

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

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The FOI Act gives the community the right to access information in the possession of the VEC. Of the 14 requests received by the VEC under the FOI Act, all but one were satisfied outside of the process. Information about how to lodge an application under the FOI Act is available on the VEC website or in Appendix E.

GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY REGISTER

In complying with Victorian Public Sector Commission standards for Victorian public sector employees on the giving and receiving of gifts, the VEC publishes its Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Register on a quarterly basis. These reports are available on the VEC website.

GRANTS AND TRANSFER PAYMENTS (OTHER THAN CONTRIBUTIONS BY OWNERS)

Included in the 'Total expenses from transactions' are payments of grants and assistance to certain companies and organisations. During 2020-21, the VEC provided grants totalling \$289,655 to six organisations (see Figure 12).

FIGURE 12: GRANTS TO EXTERNAL BODIES, 2020-21

ORGANISATION	PURPOSE OF GRANT	AMOUNT (EX GST)
Leadership Victoria	Collaborative project to train CALD community leaders in active citizenship and electoral engagement.	\$78,705
Richmond Football Club	Support for the Richmond Emerging Aboriginal Leaders (REAL) program coordinated by the Korin Gamadji Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to build their leadership skills through active citizenship and position them as role models within their community.	\$111,650
University of Adelaide	Joint research project into informal voting.	\$15,000
University of Melbourne	Development of Electoral Law Library and ongoing support of Electoral Regulation Research Network (ERRN) Sponsorship.	\$22,119
Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC)	Sponsorship of VicSRC Congress and development of modules on civics and electoral engagement for VicSRC online platform.	\$30,000
YMCA Victoria	Sponsorship of five youth Parliament teams and development of online electoral education modules.	\$32,181
Total		\$289,655

INFORMATION AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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

During 2020-21 the VEC:

- continued to use SharePoint as the VEC electronic document and records management system
- used business impact levels, privacy impact and security risk assessments to make good information management decisions
- improved information and knowledge management maturity
- met reporting obligations imposed by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*.

LEGISLATION

The VEC is subject to, and complies with, a range of legislation listed in Appendix B and detailed in this report as applicable.

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

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

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

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT

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

In 2020-21, there was zero lost time injury. For more on human resource management at the VEC, including performance against OHS management measures, see the 'Our People' section of this report.

PECUNIARY INTEREST DECLARATIONS

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

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES ACT 2012

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

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

VICTORIAN INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION POLICY

The *Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003* requires public bodies and departments to report on the implementation of the Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPP). Departments and public bodies are required to apply VIPP in all tenders over \$3 million in metropolitan Melbourne and \$1 million in regional Victoria. No contracts to which the VIPP applies were commenced or completed by the VEC during 2020-21.

Lishanthi Anthony

Business Analyst

Information Technology



“ *As part of the IT team, my role contributes in identifying and delivering technology that can improve the range of electoral services the VEC can offer to Victorians.* ”

THE VEC’S VISION IS FOR ALL VICTORIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR DEMOCRACY. HOW DOES YOUR ROLE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

As part of the IT team, my role contributes in identifying and delivering technology that can improve the range of electoral services the VEC can offer to Victorians. We believe that these technologies open new frontiers and offer new possibilities for the electoral process to increase participation among voters and make elections more inclusive for voters with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse voters.

WHAT MAKES THE VEC AN INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING PLACE TO WORK?

Inclusive workplace practices are core to creating a culture of innovation – the VEC is an organisation that recognises and appreciates all its employees. We have employees from various industries, cultures and experiences. The inclusive workplace practices harness the intelligence, skills and passion of everyone in the organisation. This also makes all of us want to step up our game, create, connect with each other and contribute.

DURING 2020–21, THE VEC CONDUCTED THE 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS. HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR ROLE?

Delivering an election during a pandemic brought its unique challenges. Having to deliver most services remotely, be it assessing the election readiness of various systems pre-election, analysis of various IT incidents that took place during the election period by collaborating with various stakeholders and providing solutions for those incidents was demanding at times. However, these situations were well managed with a clear plan and a supportive team and management.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?

Due to the travel restrictions of the past year or so, I have taken up new hobbies such as cooking different cuisines. Learning about food has been a true eye-opener as I discover meals that I have not even heard about before. My love of food has led me to add a few destinations to my ever-expanding bucket list and hopefully I will get to visit these places when we are safe to travel.

Our core business

ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21



Delivery of enrolment stimulation and integrity activities for the 2020 local government (LG-2020) elections.



Provision of administrative and technical assistance to the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) for the redivision of State electoral boundaries.



Development of the Public Online Submission and Mapping Tool to enable Victorians to participate in the redivision of State electoral boundaries.



Delivery of the VEC's first Geospatial Strategy.



Development of new geospatial tools including the Interactive Map, enabling Victorians to easily view Local Government and State electoral boundaries.



Development of an organisation-wide Stakeholder Management Framework and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.



Launch of the VEC's Online Research Panel pilot to quickly and cost-effectively monitor reputation measures and gather data for decision-making.



Conduct of customer journey mapping for all key stakeholders who are required to deal with the VEC and the subsequent development of eight 'customer personas'.

OUTLOOK 2021-22



Supporting the EBC to finalise State electoral boundaries.



Preparing for the 2022 State election, including enrolment stimulation and integrity programs.



Providing administrative and technical support as required to the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel when established under the Local Government Act 2020 (LGA 2020).



Finalising development of the Election Management System.



Progressing development of the new Roll Management System.



Planning and conducting the elections for South Gippsland Shire Council in October 2021.

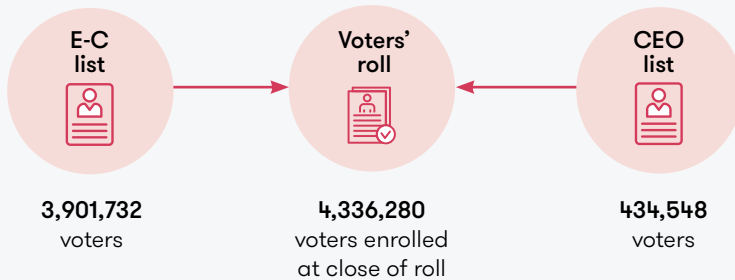


Expanding the VEC BeHeard Democracy Ambassador program, leading up to the 2022 State election.



Implementing the VEC Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS



3,715,881
ballot packs sent out to voters



3,473,718
ballot packs returned by 30 October



2,194
candidates nominated for the LG2020 elections

2016
6.29%

2020
4.72%

The overall informality rate has decreased compared to 2016



155,351
visits to VEC website via social media during election period

Highlights between Friday 7 August to Monday 30 November 2020:



Facebook
101 posts
314 message enquiries
1,189 new followers
8,476 reactions, comments, shares



Twitter
460 tweets
583 new followers
679 retweets
1,691 likes
465 replies



Instagram*
40 posts
1,795 new followers
33 comments



LinkedIn
39 posts
179 new followers
33 likes, comments, shares



Data matching

VEC scrutinised the roll and removed any duplications.



Preliminary roll production

VEC provided detailed feedback to councils.



Primary roll production

Councils received feedback reports to action.



Update processing

Ensured the extracts were compliant with legislation.

“The 2020 local government elections were my first time in a Senior Election Official role in a postal election. It was vastly different to my previous experience working at an attendance election. I particularly noticed the difference in the nomination period – there’s a lot of work for Election Managers to do in processing local government nominations, in a very short window of time. It was of course also quite challenging working under COVID conditions. Despite the challenges, it was gratifying to see that, even under the strangest of conditions, we had a team that worked really well together, and we were able to deliver a free and fair election to the people of Maroondah.”

Sandi Miller

Election Manager for Maroondah City Council

The local government elections, held during October 2020, were like no other held in Victoria. The constraints imposed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic added further complexity to the delivery of the elections. With 298 individual elections to be conducted across 76 Victorian councils, and varying restrictions across metropolitan and regional councils in place across the timeline, the VEC needed to be agile and respond to the changes in the environment as they occurred.

At the close of roll, over 4.33 million voters were enrolled to vote. Following the close of nominations 2194 candidates had nominated for the 298 elections – the highest number of candidates and simultaneous elections to date. A total of 26 elections across 17 councils were uncontested – where the number of candidates was the same as the number of vacancies, therefore voting was not required, and the candidates were subsequently declared elected.

As this was the first time all local government elections were held as full postal elections (in 2016, six elections were attendance elections), the VEC needed to work closely with Australia Post to ensure that ballot material was received by voters and returned to election managers within tight timelines.

Ballot packs were mailed to voters in contested elections from Tuesday 6 to Thursday 8 October. As required in legislation, ballot material must be posted or delivered to no more than 35% of voters on the roll on any one day. Voters had until the close of voting, 6 pm on Friday 23 October, to have either mailed or hand delivered their completed ballot material to the election office. By the close of voting, 2,833,614 returned votes had been received across all councils. Ballot material received at the election office between the close of voting and the close of the extended postal vote receipt period could be considered, if it was determined to have been completed by the voter before the close of voting – 721,636 votes were received during this period.

The 2020 local government elections realised the highest average turnout for Victorian elections at 81.47% – a 9% increase compared to 2016. The informality rate at 4.76% was lower than in 2016 at 6.29%. Counting for all elections took place in the three weeks following the close of voting; again, strict rules applied as to the number of people able to participate in and observe the counting activities. While it was anticipated that all elections would be declared no later than Friday 13 November, the results for all elections were declared by Wednesday 11 November 2020.

2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (CONT)

The *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) received royal assent on 24 March 2020 and is the principal legislation governing the conduct of local government elections in Victoria. The LGA 2020 prescribes the VEC as the statutory provider of election services to Victoria's local councils.

The LGA 2020 introduced several changes, some requiring immediate implementation and others to be implemented progressively. Those requiring immediate implementation had a significant impact on the LG2020 election program.

Following the LGA 2020 completing its passage through Parliament, the VEC implemented the necessary changes to the LG2020 election program in response to the reforms as they applied to the elections.

Among other changes, the LGA 2020 provided for the Minister for Local Government to set the voting system (attendance or postal) and for candidates nominating a declaration that they have completed the mandatory Local Government Candidate Training.

In addition, new Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (the Regulations) came into operation on 13 July 2020.

The VEC focused on its partnerships with the local government sector by providing regular updates in the lead-up to the elections and individual electoral service agreements with each local council. In addition, the VEC engaged with key stakeholders including Local Government Victoria (LGV), the Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) and peak body organisations.

In October 2020, the VEC conducted general elections for 76 of Victoria's 79 councils. There were no elections for Casey City Council, South Gippsland Shire Council and Whittlesea City Council as they were under administration. The next general election for South Gippsland Shire Council is scheduled for October 2021, while the next general elections for Casey and Whittlesea City Councils will not be held until October 2024.

As determined by the Minister for Local Government, all elections were held entirely by post.

A record 2,186 candidates nominated for the 622 vacancies across the 298 individual elections, resulting in 271 contested elections and 26 uncontested elections (where the number of candidates was equal to the number of vacancies). In Northern Grampians Shire Council three of the four wards (Central, Kara Kara and Stawell) were uncontested, while the election failed in South West Ward as no candidates nominated for the single vacancy. Additionally, in Hindmarsh Shire Council, the East Ward election was incomplete as it had less candidates than the number of vacancies. By-elections were required for Hindmarsh South West Ward and Northern Grampians East Ward to fill the vacancies. No voting was required for the uncontested, incomplete or failed elections.

The VEC was responsible for the preparation of the voters rolls for 75 of the 76 council elections (Melbourne City Council prepares its own roll). All voters rolls were prepared within the statutory timeline and were certified by the Registrar on 17 September 2020, triggering the opening of nominations.

The VEC established 76 election offices for the elections. Three large computer-count venues were also established, two within metropolitan Melbourne and one in Geelong to support computerised counting operations for 19 councils.

The VEC prepared and dispatched over 4.2 million ballot packs during the legislated three-day period between Tuesday 6 and Thursday 8 October.

Ballot papers in 122 multi-councillor and unsubdivided councils were counted using proportional representation. These counts were supported using the VEC's computer count application, where preferences from ballot papers are entered into the application by data entry operators prior to the calculation of results. For the 149 single-councillor elections and for the Melbourne City Council leadership team election ballot papers were counted using the preferential method. The results for all elections had been declared by Wednesday 11 November 2020.

The VEC responded to 2,087 complaints throughout the election period. Of these 1.5% were referred to councils as they related to local law matters and 11% were referred to the LGI as they alleged possible breaches of the LGA 2020. The VEC's average response time to each complaint was six working days.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) is responsible for hearing disputes on the validity of an election under section 311 of the LGA 2020.

Applications for a review of the declaration of the results of an election must be lodged within 14 days of the election and can be made by a candidate in the election, 10 persons who were entitled to vote at the election, or the VEC.

Following the LG2020 elections, there were nine applications to VCAT including one brought by the VEC. Of these, five applications were withdrawn and four remain before VCAT as at 30 June 2021.

The VEC has responsibility for the enforcement of compulsory voting. Across 75 local councils, a total of 354,425 Apparent Failure to Vote Notices (AFTVN) were sent. Subsequently 270,171 Infringement Notices were issued to those who either did not respond to the AFTVN or did not provide a sufficient reason for failing to vote.

During the Penalty Reminder Notice stage of enforcement 216,263 notices were issued to those who did not pay the infringement penalty, hadn't had their infringement withdrawn or who had sought to go directly to the Magistrates' Court. The VEC will lodge any outstanding infringements with Fines Victoria during the 2021-22 financial year. Further detail on enforcement is provided on page 57. The VEC conducted an extensive evaluation and debriefing program following these elections and recommendations for future consideration have been documented.

In accordance with the LGA 2020, a report on each council's election was delivered to the respective council in April 2021 (within six months of the election date). A consolidated report on the conduct of the LG2020 elections will be provided to the Minister for Local Government and tabled in Parliament in August 2021.

Response to public health crisis: COVID-19

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic, a State of Emergency was declared in Victoria on 16 March 2020. While the VEC was well advanced in planning for the elections, some uncertainty arose due to speculation that the elections could be rescheduled.

Following the Minister for Local Government's confirmation on 15 May 2020 that the LG2020 elections would proceed, the VEC's operating model was adjusted to deliver a compliant election while meeting health, safety, social distancing and hygiene obligations to voters, election staff, councils, candidates and all other stakeholders.

On 1 September 2020, the Governor in Council made amendments to the regulations to allow certain provisions to be varied in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the amendments allowed the VEC to determine an appropriate method for eligible candidates to lodge their nomination form and pay their nomination fee electronically; and to allow the Election Manager to determine the maximum number of scrutineers that may be present for any activity at any one time. The amended regulations commenced the day after they were made and will remain in place until 26 April 2022.

On 29 September 2020, the Governor in Council made further changes to the Regulations to provide greater clarity of mitigation options for any disruptions to the voting timeline, including delays across the postal network that could threaten the integrity of the elections. The changes allowed the Electoral Commissioner to alter the last day of voting and/or the extended postal vote receipt deadline if necessary, to maintain and protect election integrity. This provision was not exercised.

The VEC developed a COVIDSafe Election Plan in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, which complemented the VEC's Service Plan. The COVIDSafe Election Plan outlined the VEC's actions and strategies to deliver safe and compliant local government elections.

2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (CONT)

The Plan considered all electoral operations and activities and included changes such as (but not limited to):

- acquiring larger election office spaces to accommodate social distancing practices
- moving operations from face-to-face to online (when legislation permitted), for example:
 - the VEC's briefing meetings with individual councils
 - the candidate information sessions
 - delivery of education and outreach services
- modifying the timeline for ballot paper extraction and counting activities
- modifying scrutineer practices.

The relevant operational aspects of the election service delivery were adjusted accordingly.

Costing expectations

The VEC operates a marginal cost recovery program to invoice for reasonable expenses from the conduct of local government elections. While quotes were provided to councils in early 2020 a number of councils required updated quotes due to a change in the structure of those councils resulting from the introduction of the new Act. The first invoice covering the provision of electoral services and the first phase of compulsory voting enforcement was provided to all councils in April 2021 with a total of \$21,682,160.75 (ex. GST) invoiced across the 76 councils.

Further invoicing will take place during the 2021-22 financial year to cover the compulsory voting enforcement program. Costs are not adjusted to include revenue from infringements and prosecutions for failing to vote at the LG2020 elections, which are collected by the VEC and remitted in whole to councils.

Performance target outcomes

In order to evaluate the overall success of the LG2020 election program, the VEC nominated 14 performance targets for reporting at the conclusion of the program. These targets ranged from aspirational measures to enhance voter participation, to more operational measures, such as roll accuracy, results reconciliation and outreach services. The targets were measured against election preparation, election conduct and election outcomes. Overall, 13 of the 14 targets were fully achieved. One target (the establishment of election service agreements with local councils by May 2020) was only partially achieved as four councils were under restructure and agreements could not be finalised until their new structure had been formalised.

Planned initiatives

The VEC's LG2020 election program was prepared on the principles of providing a local focus for election services and keeping costs to a minimum. These principles are additional to the VEC's continuous focus on building and maintaining integrity in all electoral processes.

The election service plan, published in December 2019, provided details on each element of the planning and formal election timelines. The plan highlights several initiatives that are new to the local government program, including continuing the VoterAlert messages provided at the 2018 State election and local government by-elections. VoterAlert messages reminded State-enrolled voters to check their enrolment details before the close of roll, and to vote during the voting period.

Other initiatives included the increased assurance measures for ballot paper security implemented at the 2018 State election, continuing the online enrolment facility for State electors, and the possible sharing of computer count venues among a number of councils.

ELECTORAL ACTIVITY

The VEC conducted general elections for 76 of Victoria's local councils during 2020-21. In addition, nine other electoral events were conducted, including three local government by-elections, three local government countbacks and three fee-for-service elections and polls.

All events were successfully conducted as scheduled and within budget, with no result overturned. The VEC also provided technical and administrative support to the Electoral Boundary Commission's redivision of Victoria's State electoral boundaries.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY-ELECTIONS AND COUNTBACKS

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

Extraordinary vacancies are not required to be filled if they occur within six months of a general election, so councils were able to carry vacancies from 24 April 2020. The VEC was made aware of one such extraordinary vacancy that occurred during the 2020-21 reporting year, prior to the conduct of the LG2020 elections, that was carried by its respective council.

During 2020-21, the VEC conducted three local government by-elections and four countbacks to fill extraordinary vacancies.

The details of all by-elections and countbacks conducted during 2020-21 are included in Figures 15 and 16 on page 53.

The number of extraordinary vacancies was higher in 2020-21 than in 2016-17, which is the previous reporting year comparable to this stage of the local government term, when there were no by-elections and four countbacks.

In 2020-21, all countbacks were held online via Cisco Webex webinar, using the VEC's web-based computer countback application.

The average cost of a countback in 2020-21 was \$1,300 (including GST). This cost includes public notices placed in local newspapers (where requested), configuration of the countback application, and staff time.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL STRUCTURE AND WARD BOUNDARY REVIEWS

Under the *Local Government Act 1989* (LGA 1989), the VEC was responsible for conducting regular representation reviews according to a prescribed trigger (generally every 12 years). The *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) introduced some significant changes to these reviews (upon introduction on 6 April 2020). Representation reviews are now referred to as electoral structure reviews.

Under the LGA 2020, there is no longer a prescribed trigger for conducting an electoral structure review. Instead, the Minister for Local Government decides when a review should occur. Further, the VEC is no longer responsible for conducting the review. Under the LGA 2020, the electoral structure review needs to be conducted by an Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (ERAP). The members of the ERAP are appointed by the Minister. The Electoral Commissioner (or nominee) is required to be on this panel. The VEC is required to provide technical and administrative support to the ERAP.

Preliminary discussions have been held with the relevant Minister on the composition and operation of the ERAP. Further engagement with Local Government Victoria (LGV) is occurring including discussions about the impact of the legislative changes to electoral structure reviews as well as timing, scheduling and the level or model of support the VEC is required to provide to the ERAP.

ELECTORAL ACTIVITY (CONT)

The ways that councils can be structured has also changed under the LGA 2020. The LGA 2020 sets out only three allowable structures, reduced from five previously. In addition, the LGA 2020 specifies that single councillor wards are the default structure.

The LGA 2020 also provides for the VEC to conduct ward boundary reviews (previously known as subdivision reviews under the LGA 1989). Under the LGA 2020, if the VEC advises the Minister that the number of voters per councillor in one or more wards of the municipal district of the council will vary from the average number of voters per councillor in any other ward by more than 10% by the time that the next general election is held, the Minister may request the VEC to conduct a ward boundary review. The provisions of the LGA 2020 relating to ward boundary reviews mirror the previous Act.

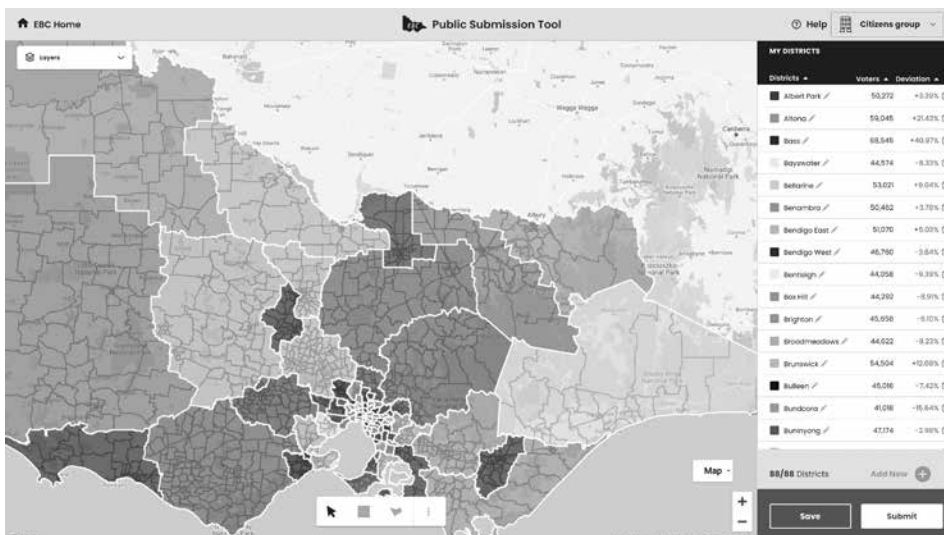
The VEC has provided advice to the Minister about councils projected to require a ward boundary review prior to the next general election in 2024.

Geospatial Support and Tools

The Geospatial team provided technical expertise to the EBC for the redivision of State electoral boundaries, including commissioning analysis of projected elector growth based on elector enrolment figures as at 30 November 2020. The Team created various boundary models, scenarios and maps using the VEC-developed BoundaryMaker tool, as a critical input to the EBC's proposed Victorian electoral boundaries.

In addition, the VEC's Geospatial and Information Technology teams develop applications that enable the Victorian public to participate in the redivision process. A web-based public submission tool allows the public to provide a written submission and create a mapped model of the lower house electoral boundaries. The public can view elector statistics for electoral districts as they modify boundaries, which assists them to understand the viability of their model according to legislative requirements. In the first stage of the redivision consultation, 67% of submitters used the public submission tool to provide a map of their proposed boundaries. The tool received overwhelmingly positive feedback from submitters.

FIGURE 13: ONLINE PUBLIC SUBMISSION TOOL



"I particularly thank the committee for the provision of the mapping tool. This is a fantastic initiative, and helps present everyone's suggestions in a clear and unambiguous manner."

Written submission

"I thank the Commission for making the online mapping tool publicly available. It greatly assists in appreciating the challenges inherent when trying to draw electoral boundaries in our changing state. It also encouraged me to vastly improve the scope of my original submission, well beyond what was originally intended to just focus on my local area."

Written submission

STATE BY-ELECTIONS

A State by-election occurs if a Member of Parliament for the Legislative Assembly resigns or can no longer hold office. The VEC maintains the capability and capacity to conduct State by-elections as required, within minimum prescribed timeframes. There were no State by-elections in 2020-21.

STATE ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REDIVISIONS

State electoral boundary redivisions are conducted periodically to help ensure fair and equitable representation for Victorian electors. During 2020-21, the VEC provided administrative and technical assistance to the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) for the redivision of State electoral boundaries.

The proposed boundaries were published for public consultation on 30 June 2021 and are available online at ebc.vic.gov.au. The release of the final boundaries is scheduled for October 2021. See page 84 for more information. The Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission 2020-21 is included as Appendix I.

OTHER ELECTIONS AND POLLS

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

During 2020-21, the VEC conducted three fee-for-service elections and polls. All were conducted in accordance with their relevant rules or legislation and were delivered on time and within budget. The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust Committee of Management election, to be conducted by attendance voting, did not proceed as quorum was not met for the annual general meeting to be held prior to the ballot. Therefore, the ballot was unable to take place.

FIGURE 14: 2020-21 STATE REDIVISION TIMELINE

	26 November 2020	Trigger date for 2020-21 State redivision
	30 November 2020	Date for which district and region quotas are calculated
Stage One	16 December 2020	State redivision begins Stage One submissions open Public Information Session
	1 March 2021	Stage One submissions close
	29 & 30 March 2021	Stage One public hearings (oral submissions)
	30 June 2021	Report on proposed boundaries is released
	Stage Two	30 June 2021
30 July 2021		Stage Two submissions close
17 & 18 August 2021		Stage Two public hearings (oral submissions in support of suggestions and objections)
28 October 2021		Final report is released (final boundaries) State redivision closes
	November 2021	Boundaries lodged with Central Plan Office
	2022 Victorian State election	New boundaries come into effect

ELECTORAL ACTIVITY (CONT)

FIGURE 15: ELECTORAL ACTIVITY, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
State elections (88 districts, 8 regions)	-	-	1	-	-
State by-elections	-	1	-	-	-
Local government (council) general elections	78	1	-	-	76
Local government (council) by-elections	-	2	5	4	3
Local government countbacks	4	10	18	12	4
Liquor licencing polls	1	1	-	3	-
Commercial elections and polls	12	12	4	5	3
Representation reviews	-	-	12	19	-
Subdivision reviews	-	-	-	7	-
Total	95	27	40	50	86

FIGURE 16: ELECTIONS, BY-ELECTIONS, COUNTBACKS AND POLLS, 2020-21

ELECTION	TYPE	ELECTION DATE	VOTING METHOD	LOCATION	VOTERS
Murray Valley Wine Grape Industry Development Order Poll	Fee-for-service election	21 September 2020	Postal	VEC	283
Northern Grampians Shire Council – South West Ward	Municipal by-election.	28 November 2020	Postal	Stawell	1,522
Hindmarsh Shire Council – East Ward	Municipal by-election	5 December 2020	Postal	Jeparit	1,565
Moira Shire Council	Municipal countback	11 January 2021	N/A	VEC via Cisco Webex	N/A
Northern Grampians Shire Council – Kara Kara Ward	Municipal by-election	20 February 2021	Postal	Stawell	2,876
Municipal Association of Victoria Board Elections	Fee-for-service election	5 March 2021	Postal	VEC	79
Victorian Canine Association Management Elections	Fee-for-service election	9 April 2021	Postal	VEC	16,986
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council – Nepean Ward	Municipal countback	13 April 2021	N/A	VEC via Cisco Webex	N/A
Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust Committee of Management Election	Fee-for-service election	28 April 2021	Did not proceed, VEC attended but no quorum on day.	Lake Tyers	299
Wellington Shire Council – Northern Ward	Municipal countback	12 May 2021	N/A	VEC via Cisco Webex	N/A
Baw Baw Shire Council – West Ward	Municipal countback	29 June 2021	N/A	N/A – modified countback	N/A

ENFORCEMENT OF COMPULSORY VOTING

The VEC enforces compulsory voting (CV) requirements after elections, by-elections and polls in which voting is compulsory. In order to conduct CV follow-up, the Electoral Commissioner appoints a VEC staff member as the Prosecution Officer.

During 2020-21, the VEC undertook CV enforcement for 75 of the 76 councils that went to election in October 2020 and four local council by-elections. Enforcement also commenced for two other local council by-elections and two liquor licensing polls, due to be finalised in the 2021-22 financial year.

The first stage of the non-voter follow-up process is conducted under Part 9, Division 2 of the *Electoral Act 2002*, or section 266 of the LGA 2020 (previously section 40 of the LGA 1989). Subsequent follow-up of electors who do not respond, or who provide an invalid response, is conducted under the *Infringements Act 2006*.

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

1. Dispatch of Apparent Failure to Vote Notices to electors who appear not to have voted in an election. Apparent non-voters have 28 days from the date of the notice to provide a valid excuse for failing to vote.
2. Follow-up (by Infringement Notice) of electors who did not respond, or who provided an invalid response to the Apparent Failure to Vote Notice. A penalty amount is applied (currently set at \$83). Non-voters have 35 days to respond to the Infringement Notice by making the penalty payment or seeking a review of the infringement. The VEC also considers written correspondence from non-voters detailing their reasons for failing to vote.
3. A Penalty Reminder Notice is sent to those who do not pay the infringement penalty. An amount for prescribed costs is added to the original penalty amount (currently set at \$25.80). Non-voters have 28 days to respond to the Penalty Reminder Notice by making the penalty payment or seeking a review of the infringement.

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

- pay the penalty in full
- seek a payment plan

or

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

Penalties collected during the infringement period are reconciled and transferred to consolidated revenue or forwarded to councils as required. A total of \$1,438,154.16 was paid into consolidated revenue from the 2018 State election. In addition, \$58,067.25 was forwarded to councils that had elections in 2019-20. Further remittance to councils will occur as payments are received from the court.

LODGEMENT WITH THE COURTS

During the infringement and penalty reminder stages of enforcement, non-voters can choose to have their matter heard in the Magistrates' Court. The VEC concluded proceedings against three non-voters from the 2016 local government elections who chose to go to court.

At the completion of the penalty reminder stage, the VEC will finalise court files containing all outstanding infringements from the LG2020 elections with Fines Victoria for further action. Following the three stages of enforcement for elections held in 2020-21, the VEC lodged 117,463 outstanding non-voter records with Fines Victoria.

ENFORCEMENT OF COMPULSORY VOTING (CONT)

FIGURE 17: ENFORCEMENT OF COMPULSORY VOTING, 2020-21

ELECTION	NOTICE TYPE*	MAIL-OUT	RECORDS	PENALTIES COLLECTED TO 30 JUNE 2020	INFRINGEMENT COURT LODGEMENT	NUMBER OF RECORDS
Northern Grampians Shire Council Kara Kara Ward By-election 19/2/2021	1	24 April 2021	286	N/A	8 September 2021	N/A
	2	9 June 2021	220	\$1,079.00		
	3	6 August 2021	N/A	N/A		
Hindmarsh Shire Council East Ward By-election 4/12/2020	1	24 April 2021	116	N/A	8 September 2021	N/A
	2	9 June 2021	93	\$1,162.00		
	3	6 August 2021	N/A	N/A		
Northern Grampians Shire Council South West Ward By-election 27/11/2020	1	24 April 2021	128	N/A	8 September 2021	N/A
	2	9 June 2021	101	\$996.00		
	3	6 August 2021	N/A	N/A		
2020 Local Government Elections (75 Councils) 24/10/2020	1	8, 10, 12, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25 February 2021	354,245	\$4,018,367.58	29 July – 10 August 2021	N/A
	2	24, 26, 30 March 2021 9, 29 April 2021 3, 5, 7 May 2021	270,171			
	3	25, 27 & 31 May 2021 18, 23 & 25 June 2021	215,923			
Corangamite Shire Council Central Ward By-election 27/6/2020	1	21 July 2020	389	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2**	N/A	N/A	N/A		
	3**	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Strathbogie Shire Council Honeysuckle Creek By-election 21/3/2020	1	12 May 2020	95	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2	30 June 2020	68	\$1,660.00		
	3**	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Box Hill Liquor Licensing Poll (Box Hill Institute) 3/3/2020	1	12 May 2020	396	N/A	22 October 2020	124
	2	30 June 2020	275	\$5,810.00		
	3	17 August 2020	164	\$2,026.80		

*1 - Apparent Failure to Vote

2 - Infringement

3 - Penalty Reminder

- Fines Victoria penalties collected, or late payments received

** Decision by Prosecution Officer to not issue notice

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

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

ENROLMENT

The number of Victorians enrolled to vote on the register of electors increased over the year by 53,488 (1.3%) to 4,310,413 as at 30 June 2021.

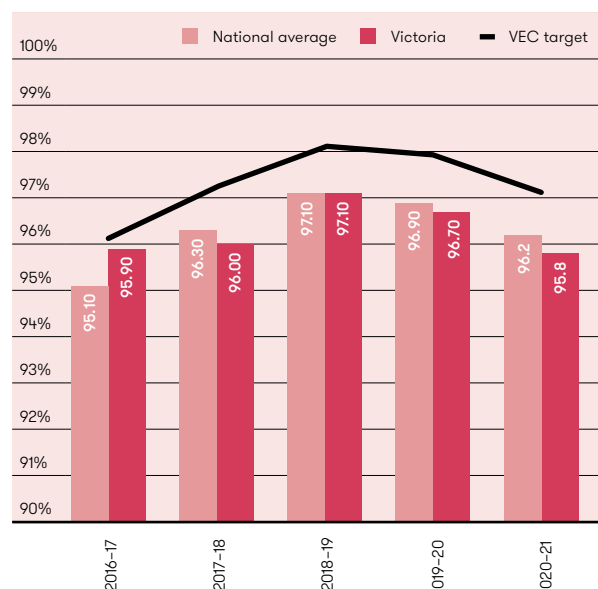
Using available data, it is estimated that the enrolment rate for Victoria at 30 June 2021 was 95.8%. This is a decrease of 0.6% since 30 June 2020 and 0.4% lower than the enrolment rate nationally. The enrolment rate is calculated by the Australian Electoral Commission using enrolment figures and Estimated Eligible Population (EEP) based on data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). During the reporting period new data from the ABS resulted in an increase in the EEP in Victoria, which had the effect of lowering enrolment rates. The full extent of COVID-19’s impact on Victoria’s population and enrolment rates remains unclear, and data from Australia’s 2021 Census will provide valuable insights.

Enrolments across each age range increased during the year, with 11,520 under 18 provisionally enrolled electors (13.6% increase), 772,725 18–29 year olds (0.2% increase), 2,827,172 30–69 year olds (0.9% increase) and 710,300 electors aged 70 years and older (3.9% increase) enrolled to vote.

FIGURE 18: TOTAL NUMBER OF ENROLLED ELECTORS, 30 JUNE 2017 TO 30 JUNE 2021



FIGURE 19: PROPORTION OF ELIGIBLE POPULATION ENROLLED FROM 30 JUNE 2017 TO 2021



REGISTER OF ELECTORS (CONT)

JOINT ROLL ARRANGEMENT

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

The broad goal is enhanced collaboration, coordinated messaging and improved enrolment service delivery for Victorians.

An important focus of the JRMC during 2020-21 was assessing potential causes for 'divergence' between the Commonwealth and State register of electors for Victoria and identifying strategies to minimise future divergence. As a result of these activities, the VEC adopted a new policy to accept direct enrolment updates from the AEC.

FIGURE 21: ENROLMENT TRANSACTIONS, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

VEC ENROLMENT PROGRAM TRANSACTIONS ¹	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
New to roll	15,884	12,748	5,868	17,388	19,795
Reinstatements	3,385	425	254	68	175
Removals	38,022	40,912	39,028	41,390	45,478
Change of details	112,881	5,501	3,368	1,331	537
Total	170,172	59,586	48,518	60,177	65,985

JOINT ENROLMENT PROGRAM TRANSACTIONS	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
New to roll	72,899	162,125	157,863	100,959	111,400
Reinstatements	27,027	32,737	43,704	16,949	22,273
Removals	60,449	53,105	66,283	57,189	68,648
Change of details	272,809	442,460	556,491	349,859	474,262
Total	433,184	690,427	824,341	524,956	676,583

OTHER ENROLMENT-RELATED TRANSACTIONS AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Special category applications ²	3,625	1,732	28,568 ³	487	584
Provisional enrolment (17 year olds)	7,775	8,927	10,680	9,766	12,420
Other enrolment campaigns	8,301	3,041	13,378	619	8,384

¹ The VEC processes enrolment transactions using information from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Department of Justice, Department of Transport and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. From 24 July 2021 direct enrolment transactions from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) are being directly accepted and are now reported under joint enrolment program transactions. Other enrolment transactions arise from quality assurance activities.

² Special category applications received by the VEC include: applications to become General Postal Voters (GPVs), silent electors, itinerant or eligible overseas electors. Some of these transactions are processed by the VEC and some are passed to the Australian Electoral Commission for processing under the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918. Non-application changes include administrative changes made to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the register of electors, as well as the processing of undelivered mail returned to the VEC.

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

ENROLMENT STIMULATION PROGRAMS

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

The VEC undertakes several enrolment programs, including its youth enrolment program, which encourages and assists young people to enrol. The program includes:

- sending birthday cards with enrolment information to students turning 17, inviting them to provisionally enrol. This year the VEC sent birthday cards to 68,441 young people.
- a direct enrolment campaign for 18-year-old school leavers. This year 14,604 school leavers were enrolled through the program and a further 12,110 were sent letters and forms encouraging them to enrol.
- sending youth brochures to newly enrolled young people to explain how voting and enrolment works in Federal, State and local government elections in Victoria. The VEC sent youth brochures to 10,097 newly enrolled young electors this year.

LG2020 ENROLMENT STIMULATION AND INTEGRITY PROGRAMS

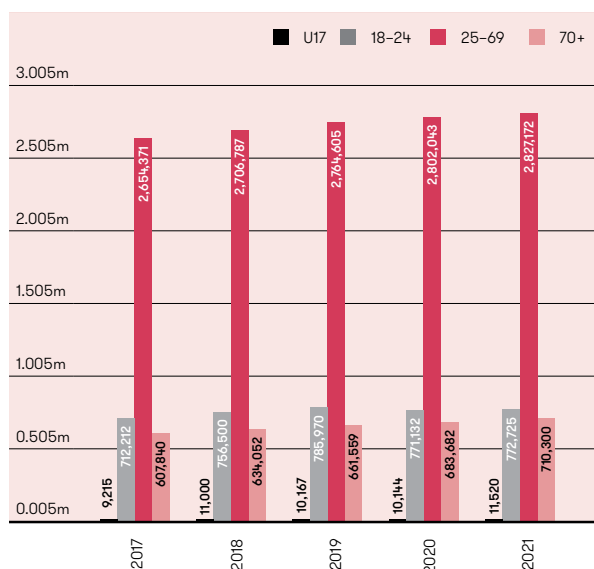
The VEC also conducted a range of enrolment stimulation and integrity activities prior to the LG2020 elections. In addition to advertising the local government elections, close of rolls messaging was sent via email and SMS to 1,977,797 subscribed electors via the VEC’s VoterAlert system. These messages reminded electors to update their enrolment details ahead of the close of rolls, resulting in 82,150 enrolment transactions being processed.

A campaign targeting electors who had not updated their details since the 2018 State election was also undertaken. These electors had different postal and residential addresses which, if incorrect, meant they may not have received their postal ballot pack. In total, 166,146 electors were contacted with 12,234 (7.4%) updating their details prior to the close of rolls.

Integrity work was conducted prior to the production of rolls, which ensured details were current for target elector groups such as silent electors, itinerant electors, overseas electors and prisoners. Also, after the election, approximately 105,000 ‘return to sender’ ballot packs were assessed, and follow-up enrolment actions taken by the VEC or the AEC.

In July 2020, the VEC distributed guidance to local councils regarding section 240 of the LGA 2020, which had operational impact on the transitional entitlement scheme for non-resident ratepayers. The VEC continued to work closely with local government roll data contacts to produce accurate municipal voters rolls within legislated timeframes for the LG2020 elections.

FIGURE 20: ENROLMENT BY AGE RANGE AS AT 30 JUNE 2017 TO 2021



REGISTER OF ELECTORS (CONT)

ROLL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REDEVELOPMENT

In March 2020, the VEC commenced a project to replace its Roll Management System (RMS). In May 2021, phase one of the project was completed, defining the business requirements for the new RMS. The second phase of the project, delivery of the new RMS, is currently underway and will continue into 2021-22.

GEOSPATIAL SERVICES

Underpinning our electoral programs is work undertaken by the Geospatial team. Through the maintenance of key spatial datasets, including electoral boundaries, statistics and the address dictionary used by the Roll Management System (RMS) and the Enrolment Registry team, the Geospatial team maintains the register of electors from a physical location perspective. This enables the VEC to accurately analyse voter information relating to the elector's primary place of residence.

The VEC Geospatial Strategy 2021-24 was endorsed in early 2021 after extensive consultation across the organisation. Delivery of the strategy will ensure the VEC has the tools, awareness and capability to utilise geospatial intelligence in the delivery of high quality, accessible electoral services. Geospatial intelligence helps Victorians actively participate in their democracy.

The objectives of the Geospatial Strategy are to:

- make the VEC a leader in the application of geospatial intelligence across electoral functions
- effectively enable people to use our geospatial tools that are designed to meet user needs
- integrate geospatial capability into our systems to help us extract value from our data and support decision-making and integrity measures
- elevate awareness of the geospatial contribution in creating meaningful outcomes and outputs that play an essential and trusted role in what we do.

A major geospatial project in 2020-21 was to make mapping information more elector focused. An Interactive Map was developed, with the aim of quickly and easily illustrating the answers to common elector questions:

- 'What is my council and electoral area?'
- 'Is there an election in my area?'
- 'Where can I vote?'
- 'Where is my nearest accessible voting centre?'

The Interactive Map enables an elector to enter an address and see which local and State government electoral boundaries apply. Information panels provide a key to colour-coded boundaries and links to answers to other questions, such as 'Who is my local member?'. An automatic alert tells the user if there is an active election in the area and provides relevant information about the nearest voting centres, including wheelchair accessibility and directions. The map works on desktop, tablet and mobile devices.

FIGURE 22: ELECTOR STATISTICS BY REGION, 30 JUNE 2021

Elector statistics by region for 2020-21 appear below:

- Total number of electorates: 8
- Total number of electors: 4,310,413
- Average number of electors per region: 538,802

REGION	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)
Eastern Metropolitan	475,889	-11.68%
Eastern Victoria	565,573	4.97%
Northern Metropolitan	563,606	4.60%
Northern Victoria	548,075	1.72%
South-Eastern Metropolitan	524,469	-2.66%
Southern Metropolitan	502,033	-6.82%
Western Metropolitan	575,200	6.76%
Western Victoria	555,568	3.11%

FIGURE 23: ELECTOR STATISTICS BY DISTRICT, 30 JUNE 2021

Elector statistics by district for 2020-21 appear below:

- Total number of electorates: 88
- Total number of electors: 4,310,413
- Average number of electors per district: 48,982

DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)	DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)
Albert Park	51,056	4.23%	Essendon	49,575	1.21%
Altona	59,464	21.40%	Euroa	50,870	3.85%
Bass	71,050	45.05%	Evelyn	43,974	-10.22%
Bayswater	44,504	-9.14%	Ferntree Gully	41,573	-15.13%
Bellarine	54,069	10.39%	Footscray	53,208	8.63%
Benambra	51,239	4.61%	Forest Hill	39,650	-19.05%
Bendigo East	51,836	5.83%	Frankston	44,980	-8.17%
Bendigo West	47,206	-3.63%	Geelong	48,455	-1.08%
Bentleigh	44,238	-9.69%	Gembrook	55,455	13.22%
Box Hill	44,471	-9.21%	Gippsland East	48,271	-1.45%
Brighton	45,539	-7.03%	Gippsland South	44,627	-8.89%
Broadmeadows	44,775	-8.59%	Hastings	52,306	6.79%
Brunswick	54,398	11.06%	Hawthorn	44,937	-8.26%
Bulleen	45,079	-7.97%	Ivanhoe	47,308	-3.42%
Bundoora	41,006	-16.28%	Kew	44,131	-9.90%
Buninyong	47,751	-2.51%	Keysborough	47,073	-3.90%
Burwood	43,700	-10.78%	Kororoit	56,351	15.04%
Carrum	50,253	2.59%	Lara	48,356	-1.28%
Caulfield	45,721	-6.66%	Lowan	43,824	-10.53%
Clarinda	44,760	-8.62%	Macedon	47,584	-2.85%
Cranbourne	70,114	43.14%	Malvern	43,296	-11.61%
Croydon	43,620	-10.95%	Melbourne	54,179	10.61%
Dandenong	43,232	-11.74%	Melton	58,459	19.35%
Eildon	46,275	-5.53%	Mildura	45,250	-7.62%
Eltham	44,720	-8.70%	Mill Park	47,721	-2.57%

REGISTER OF ELECTORS (CONT)

DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)	DISTRICT	ELECTOR COUNT	VARIANCE TO AVERAGE (%)
Monbulk	43,333	-11.53%	Richmond	54,840	11.96%
Mordialloc	47,015	-4.02%	Ringwood	42,467	-13.30%
Mornington	48,216	-1.56%	Ripon	49,744	1.56%
Morwell	49,671	1.41%	Rowville	39,866	-18.61%
Mount Waverly	39,109	-20.16%	Sandringham	46,480	-5.11%
Mulgrave	40,721	-16.87%	Shepparton	50,402	2.90%
Murray Plains	48,115	-1.77%	South Barwon	61,761	26.09%
Narracan	55,920	14.16%	South-West Coast	49,198	0.44%
Narre Warren North	45,203	-7.72%	St Albans	46,599	-4.87%
Narre Warren South	51,252	4.63%	Sunbury	47,219	-3.60%
Nepean	52,750	7.69%	Sydenham	53,125	8.46%
Niddrie	45,332	-7.45%	Tarneit	61,422	25.40%
Northcote	49,699	1.46%	Thomastown	48,516	-0.95%
Oakleigh	42,814	-12.59%	Warrandyte	43,388	-11.42%
Ovens Valley	44,657	-8.83%	Wendouree	45,480	-7.15%
Pascoe Vale	52,621	7.43%	Werribee	51,237	4.60%
Polwarth	48,471	-1.04%	Williamstown	51,668	5.48%
Prahran	50,121	2.33%	Yan Yean	64,641	31.97%
Preston	46,391	-5.29%	Yuroke	69,460	41.81%

PROVISION OF ENROLMENT INFORMATION

The register of electors contains personal enrolment information, including name, address, date of birth and gender. Protecting the privacy of electors' personal enrolment information is of fundamental importance to the VEC, and information is only disclosed as required by legislation.

Mandatory provision of enrolment information

The *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act) stipulates several circumstances in which electoral information must be made available and how it must be made available.

- The list of Victorian electors (names and addresses only), excluding silent electors, must be made available for public inspection at the offices of the VEC and updated every six months. Information can only be searched by name.
- The latest print of any electoral roll produced for an election (which contains name and address details only) must be made available for public inspection, free of charge, at locations and during times determined by the VEC.

- Enrolment information, excluding silent electors, must be provided several times each year (and at the time of an election) to registered political parties, Members of Parliament and election candidates for permitted purposes.

Enrolment information is also provided under other legislation. Under section 19 of the Juries Act 2000, the VEC provides lists to Juries Victoria of people who are eligible for jury service, and processes exemptions from jury service on a monthly basis.

Jury trials were suspended in Victoria until November 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A total of 29 jury rolls were provided under this legislation during 2020-21.

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

Section 254 of the Local Government Act 2020 provides for the release of enrolment information (a copy of the voters' roll) to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a council on request. The voters' roll can be used for the purpose of communicating or consulting with the municipal community in relation to the performance of the council's functions. The VEC released information under this provision on one occasion. The VEC released a copy of a certified voters' roll to the CEO of Hume City Council on 17 February 2021. Silent elector information was removed prior to the release of this information.

Discretionary provision of enrolment information

The Electoral Act strictly regulates the way the VEC collects, uses and discloses enrolment information. The Act ensures that electors' enrolment information is protected and not made freely available to the public.

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

Enrolment information was provided to five organisations under existing agreements subject to section 34 of the Electoral Act (see Figure 24). A standing agreement has been in place with Victoria Police since 2005, which allows immediate secure access to the register of electors.

FIGURE 24: INFORMATION PROVIDED TO ORGANISATIONS UNDER SECTION 34 OF THE ELECTORAL ACT, 2020-21*

ORGANISATION	LOOK UPS REQUESTED	UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCHES	INFORMATION PROVIDED
Adoption Information Service (previously Family Information Networks and Discovery)	113	38	74
Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority	80	30	50
State Revenue Office	(List of electors provided monthly)		
BreastScreen	(List of electors within relevant cohort provided quarterly)		
Department of Health and Human Services	(Once-off list of electors provided)		
Victoria Police	11,257 searches		

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

COMMUNICATION SERVICES

ADVERTISING

The VEC published 778 statutory advertisements (including reminder advertisements) during the LG2020 election program for 76 local councils. All printed material was developed in-house.

Two statutory advertisements were published in relation to the 2020-21 State electoral boundary redivision.

The VEC also published statutory advertising in relation to six local government by-elections and five countbacks. A total of 76 statutory and non-statutory advertisements (including reminder advertisements) were published. This includes fee-for-service events and registered political party notices.

The VEC partnered with advertising students at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology to develop a State-wide advertising campaign for the October 2020 local government elections. The focus of the effort was to increase awareness of, and engagement in, the elections – particularly among young people.

MEDIA SERVICES

The VEC maintains an open and informative relationship with Victorian media outlets. Throughout 2020-21, the VEC provided metropolitan and regional media outlets with media releases around local government electoral events (including by-elections and countbacks). The VEC also distributed media releases regarding its register of political parties, including de-registrations of political parties and applications to change parties' names or logos. The VEC distributed a total of 455 media releases throughout 2020-21.

The VEC commits to responding to all media queries within three business days. In 2020-21, the VEC responded to 320 media enquiries, with 299 resolved within one business day and 316 within three business days.

The media campaign for the local government elections was a key feature of the VEC's media services in 2020-21. The focus was on increasing news coverage as well as driving awareness of and participation in the electoral process.

During the LG2020 delivery period, the VEC issued 19 State-wide media releases, 380 council-specific releases and four radio releases, resulting in 4,796 media mentions. Four key media releases were also translated into 13 different languages and distributed to multilingual media publications across Victoria.

SELECTIONS: THE VEC NEWSLETTER

'Selections' is the VEC's annual stakeholder newsletter. It is distributed to State and local government representatives, government departments, the Electoral Matters Committee of Parliament, VEC employees, senior election officials and registered political parties. The 2020 edition was published in November and highlighted key activities from 2019-20. The newsletter was distributed digitally through e-marketing software, with the stories hosted on the VEC website.

SOCIAL MEDIA

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

Over the course of the LG2020 elections, the VEC published 460 tweets, 101 Facebook posts, 40 Instagram posts and 39 LinkedIn posts, generating over 150,000 visits to the website.

VEC WEBSITE

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

In 2020-21, a total of 1,490,873 users visited the VEC website, and 835,338 of these visits were made via a mobile device.

On Wednesday 5 August, the VEC launched its refreshed website on a new operating platform. The redevelopment of the majority of the VEC website was undertaken the previous financial year and included an overhaul of the content and information structure based on user feedback. The website was designed to meet accessibility requirements and provide an optimum experience for mobile users.

At launch, the website went live in 'election mode' to provide information to Victorians on the LG2020 elections. Information was updated throughout the election period to reflect the different phases of interest to Victorians: enrolment, nominations, voting and results.

Throughout the LG2020 election period, more than 1.2 million people visited the website, with more than two-thirds doing so via mobile phone. The number of visitors during these elections represented an increase of more than 73% when compared to the 2016 local government election period.

VOTERALERT

The VEC's notification service, VoterAlert, was successfully used to send key election reminders to State-enrolled electors by SMS, email or both during the LG2020 election period.

VoterAlert reminders were sent to almost two million electors to alert them to:

- the close of roll date
- wards that were uncontested and did not require voting activity
- councils where no election would take place in 2020
- the ballot pack mail-out period
- the last week to return completed ballot material.

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

WAREHOUSE

Warehousing and distribution facilities play a key role in supporting the core business of the VEC and ensure a high level of operational readiness is maintained. As the VEC entered another major election cycle, the focus of warehouse operations was on the preparation, deployment and return of resources from election venues across the State and the provision of logistical support for the LG2020 elections.

Key activities undertaken at the warehouse in 2020-21 included:

- picking and assembly of approximately 2,800 pallets of equipment and materials for multiple deliveries to 76 election offices throughout Victoria
- dispatch of 1,000 skids of ballot paper stock and 100 pallets of envelopes to printing and mail house facilities
- picking and assembly of approximately 400 pallets of material destined for ballot paper extraction centres and computer count venues in the days following the close of voting
- sorting of approximately 3,000 pallets of returned election office equipment, stationery, forms and envelopes
- facilitating the secure storage of records
- annual stocktake of approximately 750 products.

The outlook for 2021-22 is focused on the maintenance of equipment and preparation and planning for the 2022 State election. Activities will include:

- review of resource requirements to support operations at all election venues for the 2022 State election
- detailed logistics planning for the delivery, transfer and collection of election resources and materials
- servicing and maintenance of equipment, purchasing additional or replacement resource items where required
- inspection and maintenance of over 3,500 electrical items including electrical safety checks and the 'testing and tagging' of equipment, cables and power boards
- ordering, receipt and storage of resources with long production lead times such as ballot paper stock, envelopes and cardboard products (approximately 3,000 pallets)
- picking and assembly of stationery kits, office equipment and materials for election offices, early voting centres and centralised support locations
- preparation of voting centre stationery kits for over 1,700 election day voting centres.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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

EFFECT OF AGE ON VOTING TURNOUT

The VEC continued research into voter turnout by age cohorts over the five Victorian State elections held from 2002 to 2018. This research has revealed that voting behaviour by individual electors changes as they age, though there are signs that voter turnout by younger age cohorts is tending to decline. Electors who were enrolled at 18 show consistently higher turnout rates than those who enrolled later. This research is being done in collaboration with a researcher in Western Australia, and the findings of the combined research will have nationwide significance when completed (expected to be late 2021).

ELECTORAL REGULATION RESEARCH NETWORK

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

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a remodelling of ERRN seminars from physical events to online webinars conducted via Zoom. An advantage of this change is that events could be nationwide or even international. ERRN hosted or sponsored a total of 13 events in 2020-21, the largest of which was a worldwide event on constitutional change, breakdown and renewal, which comprised nine webinars over five days, with 50 speakers from five continents. Unsurprisingly, many of the ERRN webinars dealt with the effect of COVID-19 on the conduct of elections. Other matters covered included money and politics, and truth in political advertising.

ERRN also hosted a two-day course in May 2021 on the Regulation of Elections. The course included background papers, presentations and discussions involving leading academics and practitioners in the fields of political science, constitutional law, and election administration. Over sixty participants from Australia and New Zealand debated and exchanged ideas on topics such as the constitutional framework of elections, voting rights, the media in elections and political finance laws.

ONLINE RESEARCH PANEL

The VEC's Online Research Panel commenced operations in December 2020, having recruited a representative sample of some 1,800 Victorian electors. The Panel's aim was to provide feedback on the VEC's services at the LG2020 elections. Members of the Panel have also participated in surveys to measure the VEC's reputation and to provide ideas for the VEC's communication campaign for the 2022 State election.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

In partnership with the University of Adelaide, the VEC was successful in March 2021 in being granted funding of \$200,000 from the Australian Research Council to undertake a project to understand and address informal voting in Victoria. This collaboration will address the problem of informal voting at both State and local levels over three election periods. Remedies will be trialled and assessed during the study. This research will represent the first multi-dimensional analysis of informality to be conducted in any western democracy. The VEC's financial commitment to the research over four years is \$60,000 plus an in-kind contribution equivalent to \$214,050.

FUNDING AND DISCLOSURE

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

The funding and disclosure scheme includes disclosure obligations for those giving and receiving political donations, and provides candidates, elected members and registered political parties with access to three streams of funding:

- administrative expenditure funding
- policy development funding
- public funding¹.

Administrative expenditure funding and policy development funding entitlements occur annually and are subject to an annual return following the end of each calendar year. Public funding is calculated from first preference votes received at the last State election and may be paid in instalments in advance of the next State election. Any overpayment as a result of advance funding will be corrected and recovered in accordance with the Electoral Act.

Section 217Q of the Electoral Act requires that donation caps, thresholds and funding amounts be indexed annually. The indexation increase factor for the 2020-21 financial year was 1.020070. For the 2020-21 reporting year, the following caps, thresholds and funding amounts were applied in the table on the right.

VEC Disclosures: The online disclosure system

The VEC Disclosures system was the subject of two major development tranches to further enhance the capability, compliance and functionality of the system, and to improve user experience. The development program is monitored by the project steering committee in accordance with the major projects schedule.

ANNUAL RETURNS

Annual returns for the 2019-20 reporting period were required to be lodged by 20 October 2020.

The VEC published 82 annual returns, of which:

- 18 annual returns were from registered political parties
- 61 annual returns were from associated entities
- three annual returns were from nominated entities.

	AMOUNT
Disclosure threshold	\$1,040.00
General cap	\$4,160.00
Public funding MLA	\$6.25 per vote
Public funding MLC	\$3.12 per vote
Administrative expenditure funding (per year)	\$208,200 for the first member
Capped at 45 members	\$72,860 for the second member
	\$36,440 for the third to forty-fifth members
Policy development funding	\$1.04 per first preference vote or \$26,020 (whichever is greater)

The quality of the annual returns and their associated audit certificates continued to be mixed, reflecting an opportunity to provide further education and guidance to reporting entities.

However, while some annual return submissions misunderstood requirements of the Electoral Act, the number of fully compliant submissions and overall quality of annual return submissions was significantly improved on the previous year.

This result reflects a greater level of engagement with reporting entities during the annual returns process as well as the VEC's continued program of building capability and capacity within the dedicated Funding and Disclosure Unit.

Following the publication of the annual returns, information from the returns has informed the Funding and Disclosure Unit's compliance program, including investigations into potential offences against the Act.

¹ Public funding is available for Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Members of the Legislative Council (MLC). Different entitlement amounts apply per member.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The VEC has adopted a constructive compliance approach for its regulatory activities. Accordingly, the VEC is committed to engaging with stakeholders to promote compliance with Victoria's funding and disclosure laws. In situations of specific non-compliance, the VEC will assess the nature of the issue and determine an appropriate compliance and enforcement response.

The VEC may initiate an investigation and is empowered to issue notices to require information to assist with investigations. Depending on the extent of any offence, the VEC may issue a formal caution or initiate a prosecution within a period of three years from the time of the offence.

During the reporting period, one notice was issued by a compliance officer requiring information pursuant to section 222B of the Electoral Act.

During the reporting period, the Funding and Disclosure Unit has triaged and commenced investigations into a number of matters, relating to allegations of failures to provide disclosure returns, providing false or misleading information, and failing to provide an annual return. The Unit is also working with external enforcement agencies in relation to a variety of other matters. These investigations are ongoing.

During the reporting period, no charges were filed against persons alleged to have committed offences against Part 12 of the Electoral Act.

DONATIONS DISCLOSURE

During the reporting period, the VEC published 53 donation disclosures through 'VEC Disclosures', the online disclosure system. These published donations amounted to \$101,635.00.

Only donations over the disclosure threshold are required to be disclosed. Donations under the threshold are aggregated and the aggregated amount must be disclosed once it exceeds the disclosure threshold.

Donations over the general cap and all donations from overseas donors are banned. The VEC received no reports of banned donations during the reporting period.

Ongoing data matching is undertaken by the Funding and Disclosure Unit to assess compliance with the donation disclosure requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

POLITICAL FUNDING

During the reporting period, the VEC paid a total of \$12,343,277.74 on behalf of the State to eligible registered political parties, independent elected members and candidates entitled to access funding. This included:

- \$5,854,452.76 in public funding
- \$6,438,920.08 in administrative expenditure funding
- \$49,904.90 for policy development funding.

The VEC also recovered \$274,874.55 in relation to overpayments for political funding paid during the previous financial year. As at 30 June 2021, an overpayment amount of \$129,983.73 remains outstanding, pending recovery from one funding recipient in the 2021-22 financial year.

Public funding dispute

On 14 October 2020, the Supreme Court released its decision to uphold a joint application by the State Director of the National Party of Australia (Victoria) and the State Director of the Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division) for declaratory relief in respect to the distribution of public funding for composite groups in elections for the Legislative Council.

The decision followed a hearing on 14 September 2020 and will be used to inform the VEC's future regulatory approach for public funding involving composite groups.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Following observations of annual returns during previous years, the VEC engaged more closely with reporting entities in the lead-up to the October 2020 annual returns deadline. The VEC established a funding and disclosure newsletter to directly engage with reporting entities and provide updates on reporting obligations.

With the 2022 State election on the horizon, the VEC is focused on increased engagement and working on educational opportunities with reporting entities to ensure maximum compliance and understanding in advance of the election.

In addition, the VEC has updated factsheets and reference material with additional information to clarify common areas of confusion. These updates are intended to ensure reporting entities have the maximum available information to comply with their obligations under the Electoral Act.

Luis Gonzalez

Digital and online communication specialist

Communication and Engagement Branch



“ *Managing the VEC website during an election is a non-stop activity. The information the public needs evolves daily, and I must stay two steps ahead of a very tight schedule.* ”

THE VEC’S VISION IS FOR ALL VICTORIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR DEMOCRACY. HOW DOES YOUR ROLE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

I contribute to the VEC’s vision by making sure the website is as clear and easy to navigate as it can be. During an election, millions of people visit the website, expecting to find out everything they need to make the voting experience as easy and convenient as possible. We live in a world where it is hard to find trustworthy information, and the VEC’s website is one of the few trusted sources of unbiased truth. This is not just a great opportunity, but also a great responsibility.

WHAT MAKES THE VEC AN INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING PLACE TO WORK?

The VEC is genuinely committed to always offering the public nothing less than it has before. This rule of thumb provides the freedom to consider and think about how to continuously apply new ideas to everything the VEC does and always improve its services to Victorians.

DURING 2020–21, THE VEC CONDUCTED THE 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS. HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR ROLE?

Managing the VEC website during an election is a non-stop activity. The information the public needs evolves daily, and I must stay two steps ahead of a very tight schedule. I also had the pleasure of managing the VEC’s free voter notification service, VoterAlert, delivering voting reminders via SMS or email to more than 2 million Victorians. The volume of people that I contacted at times felt a bit impersonal, until I got the odd message from a friend or relative who had received an SMS reminding them to vote or found what they were looking for on the VEC’s website with no fuss.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?

I like to spend my weekends on two wheels – as a keen cyclist, I’ll most likely be up early on a Sunday ready to do a big loop of inner Melbourne, up and down Beach Road, or along a mountain bike trail.

Our stakeholders

ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21



Endorsement of Stakeholder Management Framework and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2020-23.



Launch of the Multicultural Inclusion Plan.



Completion and launch of the Young People Inclusion Plan.



Completion of a co-design project with young people to better understand attitudes and barriers to electoral participation.



Customer journey mapping for all key stakeholders required to interact with the VEC and the subsequent development of eight unique customer 'personas'.



Re-launch of the Aboriginal Advisory Group.

OUTLOOK 2021-22



Completing the Aboriginal Inclusion Plan and Out-of-Home Inclusion Plan (for people experiencing homelessness or incarceration).



Embedding the Stakeholder Management Framework across the organisation.



Delivering the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2020-23.

INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

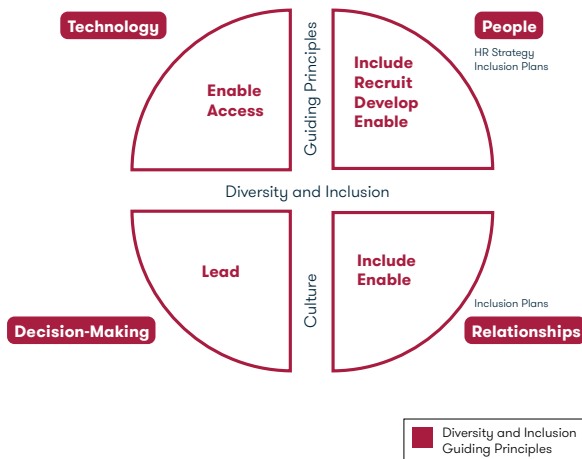
Informed citizens actively participating in free and fair elections is vital to any healthy, functioning democracy. Providing accessible, engaging electoral information and education is a fundamental part of ensuring full electoral participation across the community.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

The VEC Diversity and Inclusion Framework continues to provide an organisation-wide approach to ensure a proactive process and support to the diversity of staff and communities within Victoria.

The inward focus of the Framework continues to be provided primarily through the VEC’s HR Strategy with support from the VEC’s Education and Inclusion team. The external focus and engagement are delivered through the various inclusion plans shown in the following diagram.

ALIGNMENT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK WITH VEC INCLUSION PLANS



List of Inclusion Plans:

- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
- Multicultural Inclusion Plan
- Young People Inclusion Plan

SPECIFIC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES 2020-21

Inclusion of Aboriginal communities

ECANZ Indigenous Engagement Working Group

The VEC is represented on the ECANZ Indigenous Engagement Working Group, which has developed principles to support better practice in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Various electoral commissions have led the development of targeted strategy documents, with the VEC leading the Youth Engagement Strategy.

Korin Gamadgi Institute’s (KGI) REAL Program

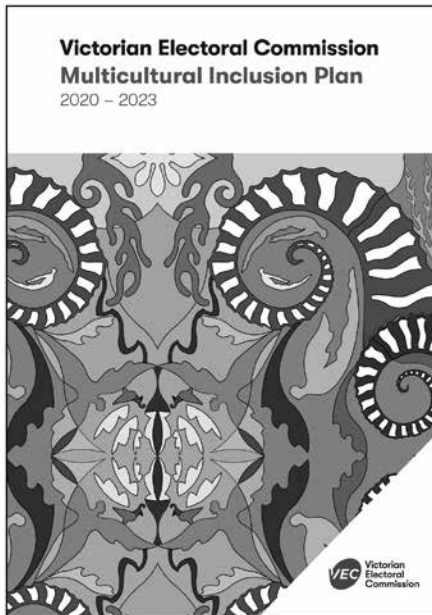
Electoral education workshops were delivered to young Aboriginal people from across Victoria in 2020-21 as part of KGI’s REAL Program. These were done either face-to-face or online depending on COVID-19 restrictions. The VEC sessions had a marked impact on levels of understanding and confidence in electoral processes, with both understanding and confidence increasing among participants. This partnership, in its tenth year, has matured to the point that VEC staff are now working with alumni from the program to develop and deliver these workshops.

Aboriginal Inclusion Plan

Since developing the VEC policy and ‘Statement on Self Determination and Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians’, work has been progressing to ensure these inform the development of a new VEC Aboriginal Inclusion Plan (AIP). The VEC has formed a new Aboriginal Advisory Group to ensure respected Elders and community leaders guide the development of strategies in the new AIP.

Inclusion of multicultural communities

Multicultural Inclusion Plan 2020-23



In December 2020, the VEC launched its first Multicultural Inclusion Plan (MIP). The MIP has been printed in both plain English and Easy English and is available on the VEC website.

The actions of the MIP are grouped into four key priority areas:

- access – to culturally responsive information and services
- employment – staff recruitment and retention
- community – engagement, capacity building, collaboration and partnerships
- capability – building staff capability to provide culturally responsive information and services.

FIGURE 25: PROGRESS ON THE MIP

SUMMARY STATISTICS AS AT 30 JUNE 2020	
Status	Overall action
On track	8
Delivered	14
Minor issues	1
Superseded	-
Not yet commenced	3

Active citizenship workshop and outreach electoral education for cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

The VEC delivered five active citizenship workshops to CALD community leaders and ethno-specific service providers. The aim of these workshops was to enhance the electoral literacy skills and knowledge of community leaders and service providers who support CALD community members.

Workshops were delivered to:

- Maribyrnong City Council’s staff and interfaith network
- Monash Multicultural Women
- Chinese Youth Leadership program as part of Leadership Victoria
- Ballarat African Association
- Western Young People’s Independent Network.

A total of 6 electoral education outreach sessions were delivered to CALD communities throughout 2020-21, reaching 65 participants.

INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION (CONT)

Talking Democracy online resource

The VEC continues to offer the Talking Democracy resource kit to CALD communities and English-language learning centres.

In 2020–21, there were:

- 534 visits to the landing page
- 43 downloads of various components
- 3,023 views of the ‘Three levels of government’ video
- 418 views of the ‘Enrolling and voting’ video.

Inclusion of Out-of-Home communities

Out-of-Home Inclusion Plan

The Out-of-Home Inclusion Plan will set out measurable actions for increasing the electoral participation of people experiencing homelessness and prisoners. The plan has been informed by extensive external and internal consultations conducted with key stakeholders.

Traditional outreach activity ceased in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, when many support services closed their doors or had limited access. The VEC had to devise alternative ways to deliver voter education to this marginalised group. Engaging with homelessness sector stakeholders and providing resources through these agencies was another effective way to stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. The VEC collaborated with social enterprise clothing store HoMie to produce VEC-branded socks, which were distributed to over 500 vulnerable Victorians during the Victorian winter.

The VEC also established a freecall 1800 number for those without the means to pay for calls. This freecall number was promoted on free facemasks distributed to clients at a range of homelessness services across Victoria.

Prison-related activity was not possible due to the COVID-19 restrictions. A review of existing electoral education resources for prisoners was undertaken, along with external consultations with key stakeholders to inform the Out-of-Home Inclusion Plan.

Inclusion of people with disabilities

Electoral Education

Working with disability service providers, schools, TAFE colleges and self-advocacy groups, the VEC continued to deliver electoral education outreach sessions either face-to-face or online during COVID-19 restrictions. Working with the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disabilities self-advocacy groups, the VEC was able to promote enrolment and voting correctly to people living across Victoria within Specialist Disability Accommodation settings, who were isolating at home due to the pandemic. Support from house staff to enable the sessions to occur was invaluable.

The VEC delivered 46 sessions this year and reached 746 Victorians with disabilities and their supporters.

Easy English worksheets

A set of Easy English worksheets with a tutorial guide was developed to support voting in the LG2020 elections. The worksheets were promoted as a tool to assist people to learn about:

- the concept of voting
- who is entitled to enrol and vote
- how to enrol
- how to complete ballot papers correctly
- the role of councillors.

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

This was the second implementation year of the VEC’s Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) 2019-23.

A range of actions were implemented under the following four priority areas:

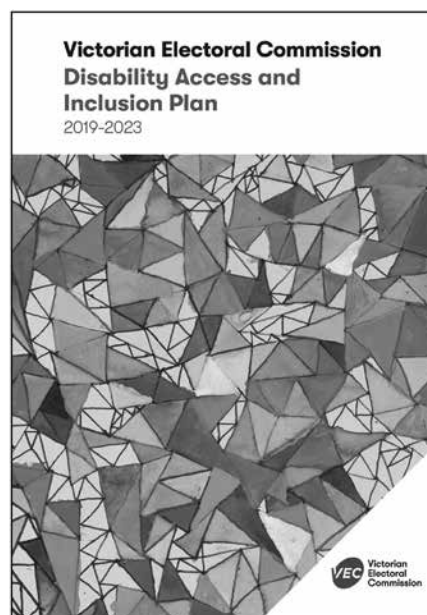
- access to premises, information and services
- employment, staff recruitment, training and retention
- community engagement and consultation
- changing attitudes, lead by example.

The following outputs were delivered:

- students with disabilities participated in Youth Parliament 2020
- review of building access audit manuals used by Election Managers
- redesign of building audit forms in collaboration with external access consultants
- end-user testing of the VEC’s public-facing websites
- production of more print and online publications available in plain English and Easy English
- training completed by relevant staff on web accessibility guidelines
- VEC staff with lived experience of disability were supported to share their stories
- completion of Australian Network on Disability (AND) Access and Inclusion Index
- recruitment was completed of the VEC’s first AND intern.

FIGURE 26: PROGRESS ON THE DAIP

SUMMARY STATISTICS AS AT 30 JUNE 2021	
Status	Overall action
On track	15
Delivered	24
Minor issues	6
Superseded	0
Not yet commenced	5



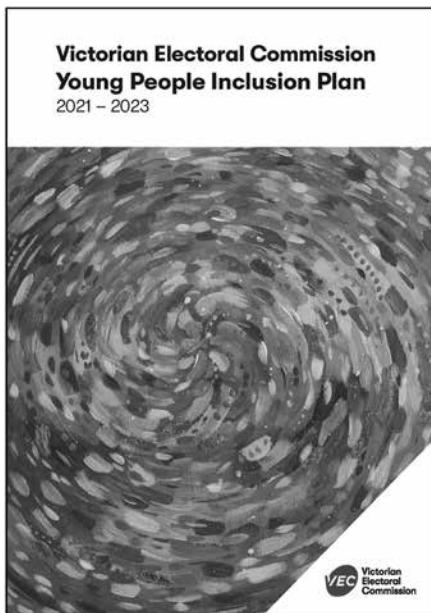
INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION (CONT)

Inclusion of young people

Young People Inclusion Plan 2021-23

This plan aims to address the issue of lower electoral participation by young people compared to other age groups. This plan includes a range of actions using an evidence-based approach and co-designed, flexible strategies, including:

- establishing a Young People Advisory Group to inform the work of the VEC
- building the knowledge of the youth sector workforce to support young people to enrol and vote
- encouraging young people to become advocates of enrolling and voting
- further enhancing the VEC's Civics and Citizenship engagement programs
- targeted research of young people to gather evidence for program design
- supporting the employment of young people at the VEC, including in head office roles.



YMCA Victorian Youth Parliament

The VEC continued an ongoing partnership with this event in 2020-21. Five teams (each including six young people) were sponsored to attend the annual YMCA Victorian Youth Parliament in September 2020. Held annually since 1987, but this year delayed, modified and delivered virtually due to COVID-19, Youth Parliament is a program designed to give young Victorians a chance to be heard at the highest levels of State Government on a wide range of issues relevant to young people's lives.

The sponsored teams, selected to represent the VEC's priority cohorts, were:

- **Greater Shepparton Secondary College** – students from a variety of backgrounds including young people who are new arrivals, refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Korin Gamadji Institute** – young Aboriginal leadership participants from across Victoria.
- **Brotherhood of St Lawrence** – young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- **Tarneit Secondary College** – students from varied cultural backgrounds and low socio-economic circumstances.
- **Headspace** – young people with a focus on youth mental health.

In addition, the VEC provided sponsorship for the YMCA Victoria's 'Virtual Y' online learning hub. The hub offers civics and citizenship information to young people aged 18-25 who are outside of formal education and may not experience Passport to Democracy or see other VEC electoral resources.

Victorian Student Representative Council

The VEC continued its long-term support of the VicSRC with its sponsorship of the Congress 2020 Twilight Session, which gave education stakeholders the opportunity to experience a recording of the Congress Action Forum and hear directly from students regarding change in education. This event replaced the usual annual Congress, which had to be postponed from July due to COVID-19. In addition, the VEC provided sponsorship towards the VicSRC's online learning suite, a series of online courses for students, schools and educators that will empower students to have a voice and take action, and support educators to enable student voice, agency and participation.

Passport to Democracy

The VEC's main electoral education program for young people is Passport to Democracy (PTD). Now in its thirteenth year, PTD has evolved from a hard-copy resource to one primarily delivered online. The program's website was refreshed in 2020 to provide three distinct user journeys: young voters, teachers and students. In addition, content has been updated and the site is now easier to navigate and more user-friendly. It offers teachers, students and young people accessible information to learn about democracy and voting at their own pace. The website gives better access to student activities, teacher lesson plans, school incursion bookings and information for young voters. PTD also provides the opportunity for schools to book a free incursion, which includes a mock election.

In the reporting year, PTD has:

- engaged with 443 schools (including via online engagement and in-person school incursions)
- reached 23,519 students (including via online engagement and in-person school incursions)
- had 358 website program unit downloads.

LG2020 elections voter engagement including the Democracy Ambassador program

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the VEC's Democracy Ambassadors were an invaluable resource to reach priority communities with electoral education and information for the LG2020 elections.

The Democracy Ambassador program provided online peer-led electoral education to CALD communities and to people with disabilities. Democracy Ambassadors delivered a total of 90 sessions, reaching 2,538 participants: 35 sessions reaching 567 people with disabilities; and 55 sessions to CALD communities, reaching 1,971 participants.

Democracy Ambassador online video project

A series of three short instructional videos were created in 12 languages for the LG2020 elections – featuring multilingual Democracy Ambassadors and VEC staff.

The videos were distributed via social media and covered how to:

- enrol to vote
- complete ballot papers correctly (with an additional video for voting in Melbourne City Council)
- respond upon receiving an Apparent Failure to Vote Notice.

These videos were viewed 51,768 times on Facebook and received very positive feedback from the VEC's external stakeholders, such as Language Loop, EthnoLink Language Services who work with these community groups.

"If you are Victorian who speak Dinka, listen to Guil Amol (electoral commission member) video on how to vote." A community member

"We are proud for our entire community and Multiculturalism." A community member

"Thank you @ The Victorian Electoral Commission!!! These videos are wonderful and very, very helpful! #Promoting #Democracy." A community member

"Here are some Victorian Electoral Commission videos made by their fantastic Democracy Ambassadors, explaining how to fill in and return your #LG2020 postal vote in 10 languages." Wyndham City Council

Furthermore, the videos have received positive recognition from:

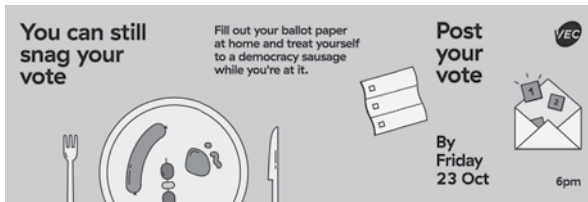
- **Language Loop** – the Australian Government Department of Health awarded Language Loop to create in-language COVID-19 health promotion videos. Language Loop contacted the Project Manager to discuss his experiences on this project.
- **EthnoLink Language Services** – used one of the videos as an example of best practice (how to create in-language video) at one of their training sessions.

INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION (CONT)

DemGraphics social media co-design project

The VEC invested in a co-design research project with young people typically disengaged with the electoral process. The result was a simple, highly engaging, shareable social media campaign for people aged 18-29 titled *Demgraphics*.

The campaign covered key concepts and information about the democratic process in language and communication styles most relevant to young people. The pilot project targeted three local council areas: Moreland City Council, Yarra City Council and Greater Shepparton City Council. The campaign was seen by over 80,000 Instagram users and will be further developed for the 2022 State election.



Aboriginal video project

A collaboration with Reconciliation Victoria resulted in the production of eight videos using a mix of animation and interviews featuring respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Four videos featured Aboriginal Elders and other leading Aboriginal community members discussing the following topics:

- How to enrol
- Reasons to engage in local government elections
- Reasons to consider standing as a candidate
- How to let the community know you are standing as a candidate.

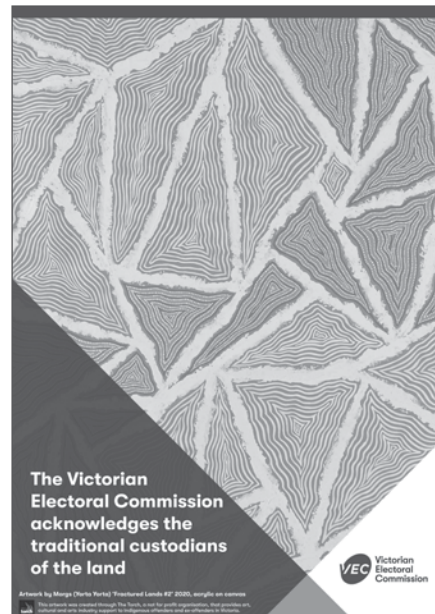
Four animations were produced covering the following topics:

- The role of local councils
- The role of councillors
- How to complete ballot papers correctly
- How to respond upon receiving an Apparent Failure to Vote Notice.

The videos were viewed 19,301 times on Facebook receiving over 850 engagements. On YouTube there were 1,288 views and a further 1,106 engagements on LinkedIn. The partnership with Reconciliation Victoria demonstrated the effectiveness and increased involvement of Aboriginal communities gained through working with an Aboriginal-led organisation.

Acknowledgment of Country poster displayed at Election Offices

For the LG2020 elections, a new poster was designed to acknowledge Victoria's Traditional Owners. The VEC sourced an artwork through Torch which is an organisation that provides art industry support to indigenous offenders and ex-offenders. The VEC chose an artwork by Morgs (Yorta Yorta) titled *Fractured Lands #2 2020*.



MOFIZ UL HAQ

Hello, my name is Mofiz Ul Haq. I grew up in Dubai, however, my family originally came from Bangladesh and India. My parents moved there for work and a better life. In a new country, they learnt to speak English and Arabic and we all picked up local customs. My most memorable moments of Dubai are associated with growing up in a place called Madina Badr. As kids, our only mission was to wake up and have fun while living there. It was where I felt the most carefree in my life.

From a young age, I found myself drawn to music. Today, I produce songs, music videos and other content that revolves around music under the artist alias, Vertex. Being part of the South Asian diaspora, my music is crafted using various traditional instruments mixed with Western structures and sounds to create eccentric fusions of R&B, hip hop, electronic and pop music that perfectly represent my brown, third cultural identity.

To follow my passion, in 2018 I came to Australia to study a Bachelor of Songwriting and Music Production. Coming to Australia, I had to build new support networks and friends, learn new customs and ways of living. It was a very challenging time, but I slowly built a life for myself here. First thing I knew about Australia was how central the coffee culture was to Melbourne which was perfect because I came with a keen love for coffee already.

In 2018, I took part in a multicultural youth-led project where I was amongst my peers. The project was a joint partnership between the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and Centre for Multicultural Youth. It was the first time I heard about the VEC. As I learnt more about the VEC and its works for culturally diverse communities in Victoria, I wanted to be part of the VEC.

At the end of the project, an opportunity to work for the VEC as a Democracy Ambassador came up. This involved delivering voter education to multicultural communities; I was keen to explore the opportunity. It was very rewarding to see communities understand why voting is important and learn how to vote correctly.

Leading up to the 2020 local council elections, owing to coronavirus, Melbourne went into its second lockdown. This presented a major challenge to the VEC. Responding to the challenge, I was asked to use my video production and music skills to produce in-language education videos for culturally diverse communities. I am so pleased to see that the videos were very well received. Who would have thought I had an opportunity to use my creative skills to support the VEC's work?

At the end of 2020, I was asked to perform at the End of Year Celebration for our Advisory Groups, where I got to share my recent works. During the performance, the VEC had an Auslan interpreter alongside me. It was very exciting to see my work presented in Auslan.

Working for the VEC has given me more opportunities. Recently, I was appointed a casual role with the Census.



SERVICES TO POLITICAL PARTIES

CHANGES TO REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES

On 15 July 2020, 'Sustainable Australia Stop overdevelopment. Stop corruption' applied to change its name to 'Sustainable Australia Party - Stop overdevelopment/corruption'. As required by the *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act), the VEC advertised the application and invited objections to the proposed changes. No objections were received and on 15 September 2020 the VEC granted the application.

The VEC also processed changes of registered officer by the Australian Labor Party - Victorian Branch, the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), the Transport Matters Party, the Animal Justice Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. Changes of address were given by the Liberal Party of Australia - Victorian Division, and the Liberal Democratic Party.

REGISTER OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The Electoral Act requires the VEC to establish and maintain a register of political parties. To qualify for registration, a political party must have:

- a written constitution
- at least 500 members who are Victorian electors, party members in accordance with the party's rules, and who are not members of another registered political party or party applying for registration.

It is not compulsory for political parties to be registered to contest an election, but registration gives a party several important entitlements. These include:

- the right to have the party's registered name or abbreviation and registered logo opposite its endorsed candidates or group on ballot papers
- access to enrolment and voter information on a periodic basis
- public funding for parties obtaining enough first preference votes
- administrative expenditure funding for endorsed elected members of Parliament
- policy development funding if eligible.

RE-REGISTRATION OF REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES

Section 58A of the Act requires registered political parties to apply to the VEC for re-registration just over two years before the next scheduled State election. The re-registration process is like that for an initial application for registration.

Each party must provide a statutory declaration that it has at least 500 eligible members, a copy of its constitution, the names and addresses of at least 500 members and the application fee (\$740.50 in 2020-21). The VEC tests whether a party has sufficient eligible members by writing to those on the list provided by the party, asking them to return a signed form about their membership in a reply-paid envelope. The VEC allows parties that have not reached the target of 500 'Yes' responses to provide one supplementary list of new members for a second mail-out by the VEC. The VEC wrote to the 15 registered political parties on 6 April 2020, reminding them of the re-registration requirements. All 15 parties applied for re-registration by the deadline of 26 October 2020. The VEC wrote to a total of 17,493 people on the lists provided by the parties on two dates: 16 October 2020 and 6 November 2020. Four parties provided a supplementary list, with a total of 6,476 names. During the re-registration process, the VEC provided a list of non-respondents to the parties, though the VEC did not disclose the nature of individual responses. Parties were re-registered over a period of some six months.

DATE	PARTY RE-REGISTERED
11 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Party of Australia - Victoria
17 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Justice Party • Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Victoria
25 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Greens - Victoria
3 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal Party of Australia - Victorian Division • Transport Matters Party
4 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Australia - Stop overdevelopment/corruption
18 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derryn Hinch's Justice Party • Health Australia Party • Victorian Socialists
22 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Labor Party - Victorian Branch
2 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiona Patten's Reason Party • Liberal Democratic Party • Pauline Hanson's One Nation
2 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Labour Party (DLP)

FIGURE 27 REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES, 30 JUNE 2021

POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY LOGO	REGISTERED OFFICER	ADDRESS
Animal Justice Party		Dr Nadine Richings Secretary	Level 5, 13/55 Buckingham Street Surry Hills NSW 2010
Australian Labor Party – Victorian Branch		Mr Christopher Ford State Secretary	438 Docklands Drive Docklands VIC 3008
Democratic Labour Party (DLP)		Mr Joel Van Der Horst State Secretary	Level 19, 180 Lonsdale Street Melbourne VIC 3000
Derryn Hinch's Justice Party		Ms Ruth Stanfield Secretary	2/4 Small Street Hampton VIC 3188
Fiona Patten's Reason Party		Ms Ange Hopkins Registered Officer	8 Shaftsbury Street Coburg VIC 3058
Health Australia Party		Mr Andrew Hicks Victorian State Secretary	1 Erinne Court St Helena VIC 3088
Liberal Democratic Party		Mr Tim Quilty Registered Officer	Level 1, 203-205 Blackburn Road Mount Waverley VIC 3149
Liberal Party of Australia – Victorian Division		Mr Sam McQuestin State Director	Level 12, 257 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000
National Party of Australia – Victoria		Mr Matthew Harris State Director	Suite 908, Level 9 343 Little Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000
Pauline Hanson's One Nation		Ms Pauline Hanson Registered Officer	Unit 17, 109 Holt Street Eagle Farm QLD 4009
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Victoria		Ms Nicole Bourman Secretary	Suite 504 365 Little Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000
Sustainable Australia Party – Stop overdevelopment/corruption		Mr William Bourke Registered Officer	20 Burlington Street Crows Nest NSW 2065
The Australian Greens – Victoria		Mr Martin Shield State Director	Level 1, 45 William Street Melbourne VIC 3000
Transport Matters Party		Mr Rodney Barton Registered Officer	Suite 2, 84 Johnston Street Fitzroy VIC 3065
Victorian Socialists		Mr Corey Oakley Registered Officer	54 Victoria Street Carlton VIC 3053

INTERACTION WITH ELECTORAL BODIES

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

ELECTION DATE	JURISDICTION	ELECTION	TOTAL VOTES ISSUED	NOTES
22 August 2020	NT	Legislative Assembly general election	0	No in-person service offered due to COVID-19 restrictions
17 October 2020	NZ	General election	0	No in-person service offered due to COVID-19 restrictions
31 October 2020	QLD	State election	0	No in-person service offered due to COVID-19 restrictions
13 March 2021	WA	State election	229	
1 May 2021	TAS	State election	361	
1 May 2021	TAS	Legislative Council elections for Derwent and Windemere	29	8 - Derwent 21 - Windemere
TOTAL			619	

ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER ELECTORAL AGENCIES

In a reciprocal arrangement, the VEC provides election services such as voting services and information provision for other electoral agencies. There were six requests for the VEC to support other electoral commissions with electoral events during 2020-21, as seen in the above table.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

A redivision of the State electoral boundaries commenced in November 2020, which was triggered by two general elections having taken place since the last redivision in 2012-13. As required by legislation, the VEC provided administrative and technical services to the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC), which comprises the Chief Judge of the County Court, the Surveyor-General and the Electoral Commissioner.

Following a call for public submissions and after the conduct of public hearings, proposed electoral boundaries were published on 30 June 2021. This will be followed by a period of further public consultation, with the final boundaries to be published in late October 2021. The final boundaries will apply at the next State election in November 2022.

The *Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission 2020-21* is included in this report (See Appendix I).

ELECTORAL COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) is a consultative forum with membership comprising Commonwealth, New Zealand and State and Territory Electoral Commissioners. This forum recognises the strong association and commonality existing between these organisations. ECANZ met on six occasions in 2020-21.

ECANZ considers best practice, innovation and integrity in activities such as the maintenance of electoral rolls, the operation of new electoral legislation and the management of elections. ECANZ has also established several cross-jurisdictional working groups to advance projects on common topics.

This year, ECANZ again consulted extensively on election operations under COVID-19 restrictions with members readily exchanging ideas on delivering election services while keeping all participants safe. Other matters considered were the security of national electoral systems, social media in elections and the national status of enrolment. The Interjurisdictional Working Group on Electoral Integrity and Security established out of the Council of Australian Governments continued to meet and gave critical attention to cyber and physical security in elections. Through this group, consideration is being given to the development of a common national electoral platform – the platform would host various functions and applications which jurisdictions could access to manage their elections. Enhanced security and cost efficiencies would be realised. As a sub-group of ECANZ, the Deputy Electoral Commissioners group continued to meet to share information and strategies around contemporary electoral practice, election evaluation and security.

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

The VEC has an interest in the work of the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC), a joint investigatory committee of the Parliament of Victoria. Its powers and responsibilities are determined by the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*.

The EMC tabled its report into the conduct of the 2018 Victorian State election on 18 August 2020. The report contained 49 recommendations covering many matters including success indicators, transparency in reporting, advertising, and election operations. The VEC has commenced work to action these recommendations. Subsequently the Government has replied to the Committee report and changes to legislation where relevant can be expected.

The VEC also contributed to a further EMC inquiry into the impact of social media on elections and electoral administration on 29 September 2020. The EMC's report on this inquiry is now expected in September 2021.

Andy Cousins

Manager, Organisational
Capability

Human Resources Branch



“ *The people at the VEC are amazing to work with and so passionate about what they do. I think that’s what makes it such an innovative and engaging place to work.* ”

THE VEC’S VISION IS FOR ALL VICTORIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR DEMOCRACY. HOW DOES YOUR ROLE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

In my role, I wear two hats. One hat is concerned with thinking about the capabilities that VEC staff need to develop to be able to deliver the organisation’s strategy.

This can involve things like advising organisational leaders on how to lead, engage, and motivate people. Or designing programs that link in with the strategy like performance and development processes for the VEC. I also work with individuals providing coaching and mentoring to improve work performance and wellbeing.

The second hat is involved with learning and development. So, analysing training and development needs for individuals, teams, or the organisation then designing and evaluating skills and behavioural training programs.

WHAT MAKES THE VEC AN INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING PLACE TO WORK?

I trained as a psychologist, specifically in organisational psychology.

I love my work in psychology because of its variety and because I love working with people. The people at the VEC are amazing to work with and so passionate about what they do. I think that’s what makes it such an innovative and engaging place to work.

DURING 2020-21, THE VEC CONDUCTED THE 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS. HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR ROLE?

Moving to remote work and delivering the 2020 Local Government elections during a pandemic provided lots of challenges and opportunities, particularly for delivering training. While there was a lot of hard work involved it was also very rewarding.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?

I am a foodie. Most weekends you will find me cooking up a storm in the kitchen. When we are not in a pandemic, I love finding new and interesting places to eat out with my partner.

Our people

ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21



Implemented learning experience platforms to support just-in-time learning with quality digital content.



Established Mentoring and Communities of Practice programs and supporting tools, resources and technology to assist staff to grow and flourish within the VEC.



Developed and delivered the Leadership Excellence Accelerator Program (LEAP), a suite of leadership journeys aligned to the VEC Leadership Capability Framework.



Initial implementation of a comprehensive software solution to administer a high-impact performance management program.



Roll out of a change management framework to guide and support change across the VEC.



Automisation of key HR processes to support streamlined delivery and compliance with policies and practices.



Increased employee engagement and support resources available through online intranet pages.

OUTLOOK 2021-22



Continued simplification of HR processes that drive responsive and agile business partnering practices.



Use of data intelligence through the People Matter Survey (PMS) in supporting staff wellbeing across all VEC branches.



Continuation of LEAP across the VEC to further support and embed leadership skills at all levels.



Ongoing evolution of a professionalisation framework for VEC staff in broadening capability and skills.



Extending capacity across the HR team in delivering tailored learning and development programs.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The key focus for this year has been on building organisational capability through focused learning and development activities and strong human resources business partnering across all branches.

VICTORIAN PUBLIC SERVICE ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

The Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2020 (VPS EA) was formally approved by the Fair Work Commission on 2 October 2020 and began operation seven days after the date of approval, 9 October 2020.

The salary and allowance increases, as outlined in the VPS EA, were made effective from 20 March 2020.

The VEC has commenced its review of corporate policies to align with changes under the new VPS EA. This work is ongoing and will continue into 2021-22.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

With the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, the VEC continued to support the delivery of operational imperatives balanced against staff needs and wellbeing.

The VEC adopted a hybrid approach to flexible work throughout 2020-21. With an office-first focus, staff are supported to 'work anywhere'. Service delivery and operational excellence remain the cornerstone of this hybrid approach. In addition to working remotely, flexible work practices include flexible start and finish times, compressed work fortnights, job share, purchased leave, banking and taking 'flex-time' and the provision of 'make-up time'.

Working flexibly will continue to be an important factor for the workforce, and initiatives are in place and in progress to further support availability and use of flexible work options, such as people leader and all staff support resources and alignment with Victorian Public Sector Commission resources.

The VEC also supports increased mobility within the VEC and across the wider Victorian Public Sector and recognises that secure and flexible employment is essential to this, with initiatives and activities in the LG2020 internal secondment project being prime examples of recognising and removing barriers to mobility and flexibility.

LG2020 INTERNAL SECONDMENT PROJECT

In the lead-up to the 2020 local government (LG2020) elections, planning for workforce resourcing took place, and short-term roles were identified to aid with resources, upskilling and removal of single-point dependencies. By creating short-term election roles, the VEC was able to distribute the extraordinary workload, provide an opportunity for staff to be involved in a major electoral event, develop staff's election skills and experience, and increase the VEC's organisational agility to manage business continuity and succession planning.

HIRING AND ONBOARDING STAFF DURING A PANDEMIC

A significant challenge for the VEC was hiring and onboarding new staff during a pandemic. Transitioning to online hiring was supported by ensuring the technology and formal processes were fit for purpose but without losing the connectivity of face-to-face.

The VEC recognises the importance of ensuring new staff are supported and engaged in the early days of their employment. Working remotely presents hiring managers and new staff with unique challenges.

People leaders were supported through these processes to ensure new staff have the required tools to be able to do their role, as well as ever-evolving onboarding and induction materials to ensure all staff feel connected and engaged.

WORKFORCE PROFILE

The VEC workforce continues to grow, increasing from 143 ongoing roles in 2019-20 to 149 ongoing roles in 2020-21 to support operational delivery.

In 2019-20 staff turnover was at an historically low level at 9.27%. This year realised an increased turnover at 14.98% with departure activity predominantly due to retirements of longer serving staff, the uptake of career development opportunities and movements within the broader Victorian Public Sector.

Gender diversity remains balanced with 48% male versus 52% female representation, and a balanced representation across all age groups, slightly skewed to a younger demographic. There is a fairly normal distribution across the VPS grades.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Development continued this financial year on a modern learning ecosystem to support and promote a culture of continuous learning at the VEC. The VEC learning and development strategy aims to establish a learning environment which helps employees learn. Not just through periodic training or events, but daily – or regularly – and in the flow of work. In addition, it needs to be a learning environment that supports and enables staff to self-improve and self-develop, to organise and make their own decisions about their learning and performance needs – one that helps them become self-reliant continuous learners.

To achieve this aim, the VEC must have effective knowledge-based support systems in place so staff have access to the knowledge they need when they need it. Work this financial year included investing in and promoting learning experience platforms to support just-in-time learning with quality digital content. Also during this reporting period, the VEC has partnered with content providers that provide access to content from some of the world's top training providers. Content that aligns to identified technical, business and people skills requiring development in the organisation. The learning team are also using this digital content, combined with VEC created content, to develop blended learning solutions.

To have a modern learning ecosystem that supports and promotes a culture of continuous learning, the VEC must support ongoing social learning, both inside the organisation and by connecting to others outside the organisation. Employees at the VEC are encouraged to reflect on how they do what they do, not just on the tasks and initiatives they need to complete.

This financial year the learning team established a mentoring program for staff at various stages of their career and is developing resources to support internal mentoring relationships in the VEC. The program also connects and supports employees to participate in external mentoring programs inside and outside the public sector. Similar work went into a framework, resources, and technology to support Communities of Practice to grow and flourish within the VEC. The intent next financial year is further development and embedding of these learning opportunities and to encourage connection with external best practices both inside and outside of the sector.

The learning team designed formal learning experiences using evidenced content in the context of the organisation. It also entered a content licensing arrangement this year with a reputable provider of well-researched and practical leadership development content. Members of the learning team underwent accreditation to develop and deliver a suite of leadership courses aligned to the VEC Leadership Capability Framework. Leaders across all four tiers of the framework will receive this training. Each leadership learning journey blends self-reflection, online learning, virtual or face-to-face classroom experiences, microlearning and on-demand development tools. At the end of June 36 participants had completed the program. The organisation is on track to ensure over 90 individuals receive fundamental leadership development appropriate to their level before the organisation delivers its next major electoral event.

A new learning and development strategy last financial year resulted in changes to the organisational capability program. This year the priority has been the employee experience and greater alignment of strategic delivery across the business at the frontline, including identifying and developing the capabilities needed to deliver these.

The key to this has been to further integrate the VEC Leadership Capability Framework into the performance and development program. At the same time, the team procured and have started to implement a comprehensive software solution to administer a high-impact performance management program.

This technology will enable changes to all facets of the performance and development program and its methodology. It will help drive business outcomes for the VEC with the more visible alignment of employee goals and the business planning process. It will increase engagement and higher performance with a one-stop-shop for managing and tracking: performance goals and learning and development goals in staff performance development plan (PDP); easy management of meetings between staff and people leaders (performance check-ins) throughout the year; and performance and evaluation surveys and feedback can also be managed easily through it.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (CONT)

CODE OF CONDUCT - VEC VALUES

All employees are provided with a copy of the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Code of Conduct on commencement of employment. The VPS values, as outlined in the Code of Conduct, continue to be a feature in the Employee Performance and Development (P&D) program. Staff are required to establish

behavioural intentions at the commencement of the performance year and document examples of meeting these intentions throughout the performance cycle.

Below-the-line behaviours (inappropriate behaviours) are called out when witnessed or identified, and appropriate action is taken.

FIGURE 28: RECRUITMENT, DEPARTURES AND TURNOVER, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

	HEADCOUNT (ONGOING)	FTE (ONGOING, FIXED TERM AND CASUAL)	COMMENCEMENTS FTE	DEPARTURES FTE	STAFF TURNOVER
2015-16	67	64.4	13	10	15.50%
2016-17	82	77.1	13	11	14.30%
2017-18	109	103.3	24	16.5	15.97%
2018-19	119	137.01	25.6	17	12.41%
2019-20	143	179.01	45.2	16.6	9.27%
2020-21	149	171.51	29.6	25.7	14.98%

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

FIGURE 29: RECRUITMENT (FTE ONGOING), 2016-17 TO 2020-21

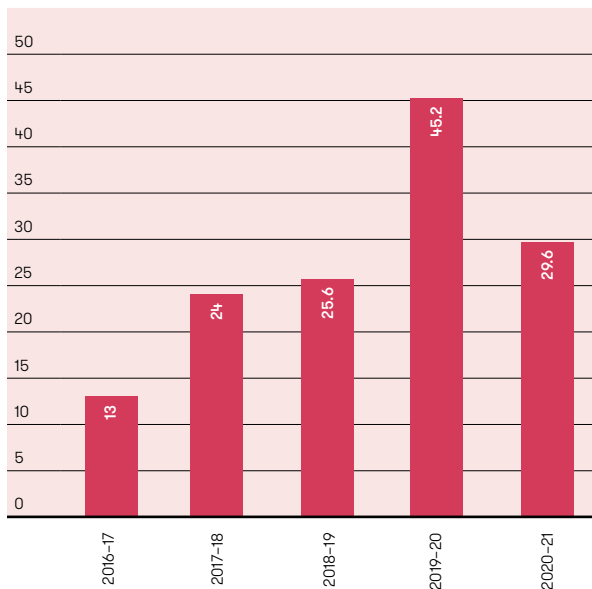
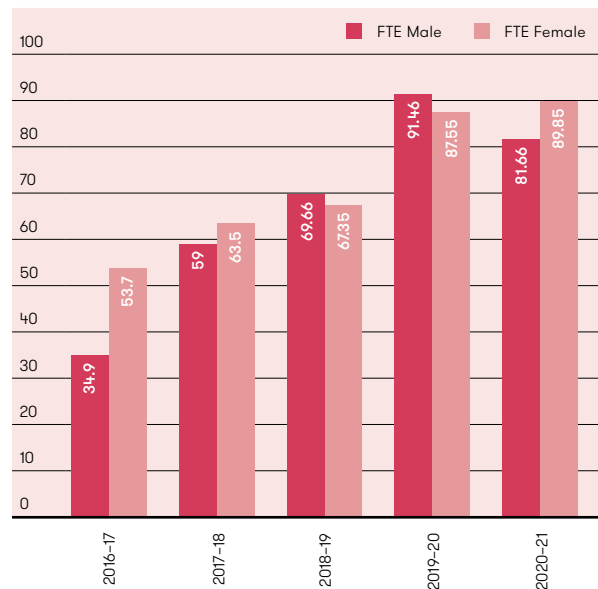


FIGURE 30: VEC STAFF BY GENDER, 2016-17 TO 2020-21



STAFF PROFILE

COMPARATIVE WORKFORCE DATA

FIGURE 31: VEC ACTIVE STAFF PROFILE, LAST PAY PERIOD JUNE 2021 (NOT INCLUDING STATUTORY APPOINTEES)

	2020					2021				
	ONGOING		FIXED TERM AND CASUAL		TOTAL	ONGOING		FIXED TERM AND CASUAL		TOTAL
	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	FTE	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	HEAD-COUNT	FTE	FTE
Gender										
Male	73.00	71.46	20.00	20.00	91.46	72.00	70.66	11.00	11.00	81.66
Female	70.00	65.15	26.00	22.40	87.55	77.00	71.75	20.00	18.10	89.85
Total	143.00	136.61	46.00	42.40	179.01	149.00	142.41	31.00	29.10	171.51
Age										
Under 25	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-	2.00	2.00	2.00
25-34	23.00	22.80	18.00	17.20	40.00	29.00	28.90	9.00	9.00	37.90
35-44	59.00	55.76	14.00	13.60	69.36	55.00	52.56	9.00	8.60	61.16
45-54	38.00	36.55	7.00	5.20	41.75	37.00	34.95	8.00	7.10	42.05
55-64	12.00	11.20	6.00	5.40	16.60	18.00	17.20	3.00	2.40	19.60
Over 64	11.00	10.30			10.30	10.00	8.80			8.80
Total	143.00	136.61	46.00	42.40	179.01	149.00	142.41	31.00	29.10	171.51
Classification										
Executive Officer*	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	-	-	1.00
Senior Executive Service*	-	-	-	-	-	5.00	5.00	-	-	5.00
STS	6.00	6.00	1.00	1.00	7.00	4.00	4.00	-	-	4.00
VPS Grade 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00
VPS Grade 2	19.00	17.61	5.00	4.10	21.71	17.00	15.41	3.00	2.10	17.51
VPS Grade 3	31.00	29.00	12.00	10.70	39.70	32.00	29.60	9.00	8.60	38.20
VPS Grade 4	32.00	30.20	19.00	17.60	47.80	33.00	31.20	14.00	13.40	44.60
VPS Grade 5	43.00	41.80	8.00	8.00	49.80	41.00	40.20	4.00	4.00	44.20
VPS Grade 6	12.00	12.00	1.00	1.00	13.00	16.00	16.00			16.00
Total	143.00	136.61	46.00	42.40	179.01	149.00	142.41	31.00	29.10	171.51

*Data not available for FY2019-20.

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

STAFF PROFILE (CONT)

FIGURE 32: FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) STAFFING TRENDS, 30 JUNE 2017 TO 30 JUNE 2021

	ONGOING EMPLOYEES				FIXED TERM		CASUAL		TOTALS	
	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FULL TIME (HEAD COUNT)	PART- TIME (HEAD COUNT)	FTE	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FTE	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FTE	NUMBER (HEAD COUNT)	FTE
2017	82.00	69.00	13.00	77.20	13.00	11.20	2.00	0.20	97.00	88.60
2018	109.00	93.00	15.00	103.30	20.00	18.60	2.00	0.80	131.00	122.70
2019	119.00	122.00	23.00	113.60	24.00	23.30	1.00	0.10	145.00	137.00
2020	143.00	124.00	19.00	136.61	46.00	42.40	1.00	0.10	189.00	179.01
2021	149.00	130.00	19.00	142.41	27.00	28.90	2.00	0.20	0.20	171.51

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

The period 2020-21 has been focused on supporting a safe and inclusive workplace, as well as the delivery of the LG2020 elections in a COVID-19 environment.

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

The VEC's Health, Safety and Wellbeing program of work aligns to the 'People' and 'Decision-making' pillars of the VEC's Strategy 2023. The VEC creates an environment that inspires our people to reach their full potential and enables smart decision-making on time and by the book. Inherent in staff reaching their full potential is their feeling of safety in their roles and their access to tools and support to make the right decisions, specifically in line with legislature and policies.

Risk identification and minimisation, incident reporting investigation and regular workplace audits remain a priority for the VEC.

Staff are supported working in a safe environment through sound onboarding compliance and skills-based training and refresher programs.

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committee has continued to take an active role in monitoring the application of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) by taking part in all quarterly inspections, reviewing OHS documentation and supporting OHS events, such as OHS Month.

Formal quarterly reporting on OHS data and activity has continued throughout 2020-21. The reports provide executives and managers with oversight of OHS performance and trends.

AUTOMATION OF INCIDENT AND HAZARD REPORTING

In collaboration with the VEC Compliance and Risk team, the HR branch commenced work in engaging Riskware, a risk management software, which will become the online portal for registering OHS incidents, near misses and hazards.

With completion of user acceptance testing, Riskware has now been moved into the production environment and is ready for release.

Rollout is scheduled for 2021-22, pending finalisation of a review of other modules of Riskware.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (CONT)

HAZARDS, INCIDENTS AND INJURIES

During 2020-21, the VEC received a total of 33 incident notifications (see Figure 35).

This is an increase from the previous year. This can be attributed to the opening of election offices throughout 2020-21 for the local government elections. Overall, incident reporting was significantly down from the VEC's last major election event, the Victorian State election 2018, though this was expected due to LG2020 being a non-attendance (postal) election.

Despite the increase in reported incidents in 2020-21, there were no claims for worker compensation in 2020-21, and no days lost as a result of a workplace-related injury.

As detailed in Figure 38 on page 98, the VEC again observed a reduction in on-site work area inspections at VEC offices. This is attributed to continued remote working arrangements. The VEC continues to demonstrate compliance in on-site work area inspections from home, including completion of Working from Home Checklists by all employees. These checklists ensured employees' home offices and work areas were safe and conducive to productive and safe working.

HEALTH AND SAFETY RECRUITMENT

In early 2021, the VEC filled four vacancies for Health and Safety Representative (HSR) positions, which became vacant after the existing HSRs three-year terms had concluded.

The new HSRs were appointed via an Expression of Interest process. All newly appointed HSRs have commenced necessary formal HSR training to assist them to support staff.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 working group established to support business continuity and staff communication continued to provide support and guidance to the wider business throughout 2020-21.

Policies and guidelines were monitored and updated in line with Victorian and federal government requirements, including management of COVID-19 positive test results, revised working from home guidelines, leave and other management support. Additional initiatives were created to reinforce staff health, wellbeing and connectedness in the new remote working environment, including 'Wellness Wednesday' events and regular communication on new safety and support measures being put in place.

All external stakeholder engagements continued to be provided in an online environment, including formal electoral functions such as representation review public hearings, countbacks and ballot draws.

It is recognised that this ever-changing pandemic environment and subsequent impacts will remain a reality for the VEC in the immediate future. The VEC has ensured it remains agile and adaptive, so it can respond swiftly and decisively as required without losing focus on the smooth delivery of electoral services.

A COVIDSafe election

The COVIDSafe Election Plan for the LG2020 elections was continually reviewed in line with the Victorian Government directions to ensure ongoing compliance. Other key sources were referenced including Safe Work Australia, WorkSafe Victoria and the Department of Health. This ensured that the work of the VEC continued safely and was able to withstand possible COVID-19 outbreaks or restrictions throughout the delivery of the LG2020 elections.

The reference group, established in 2019-20 to assist the VEC's response to COVID-19, continued to provide insight and high-level advice to the Electoral Commissioner throughout 2020-21 where required. The group consisted of external representatives from Local Government Victoria, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Health and Human Services and a consultant with expertise in complex risk management. The COVIDSafe Election Plan, combined with advice from the reference group, contributed to the safe operation of all VEC premises and resulted in local government elections that were safe, accessible and compliant.

LG2020 OHS UPDATE

The primary focus of OHS work during the LG2020 elections was to identify and address known risks raised in previous electoral events.

Effective workforce management, education and resourcing support were identified as the primary drivers to eliminating or minimising the risk of employee fatigue, turnover, and any potential Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2020 (VPS EA) and *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act) non-compliance.

Regular wellbeing support was provided to all staff through the introduction of Wellness Wednesdays, promotion of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and resilience and mindful activities such as virtual yoga sessions and resilience workshops.

A framework was developed to increase the understanding of effective resource management in both the immediate LG2020 environment and future use.

The VEC monitored additional hours of work for all VPS employees, and in particular, the VEC collated excessive hours data for VPS Grade 5 and above employees for the first time. The additional hours of work data will be used to inform future workforce resourcing and management to remove single points of dependencies and eliminate excessive hours in future.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (CONT)

FIGURE 33: CLAIMS FOR WORKCOVER, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

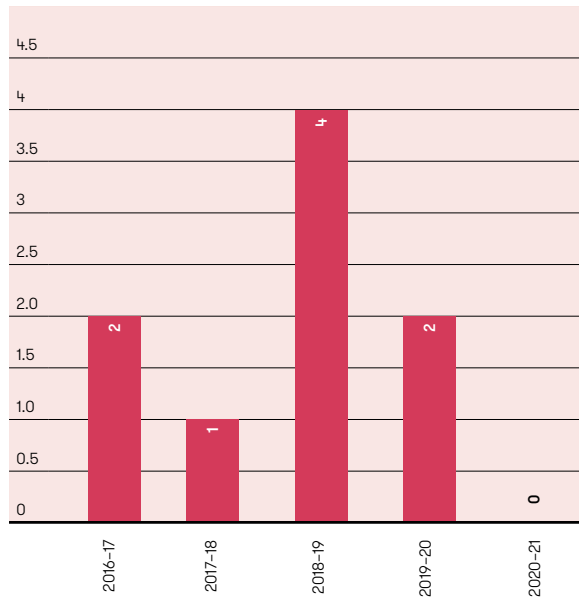


FIGURE 35: HAZARDS, INCIDENTS AND INJURIES REPORTED, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

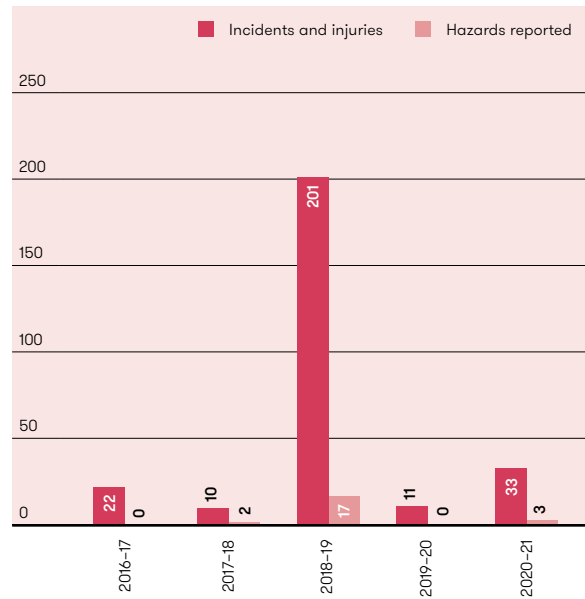


FIGURE 34: DAYS LOST AS A RESULT OF WORKPLACE-RELATED INJURY, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

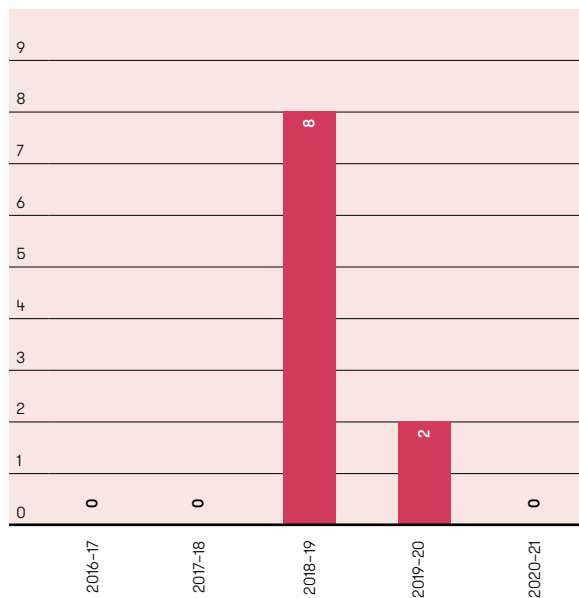


FIGURE 36: REPORTED INCIDENTS, HAZARDS AND NEAR MISSES—BY AFFECTED PERSON, 2020-21

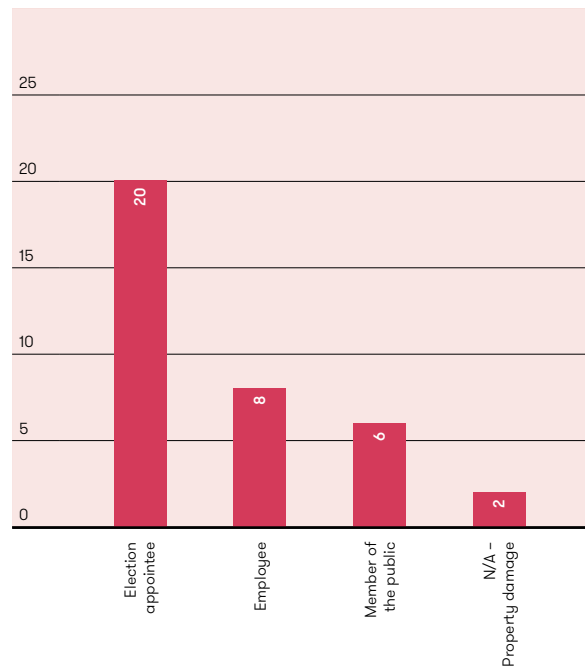
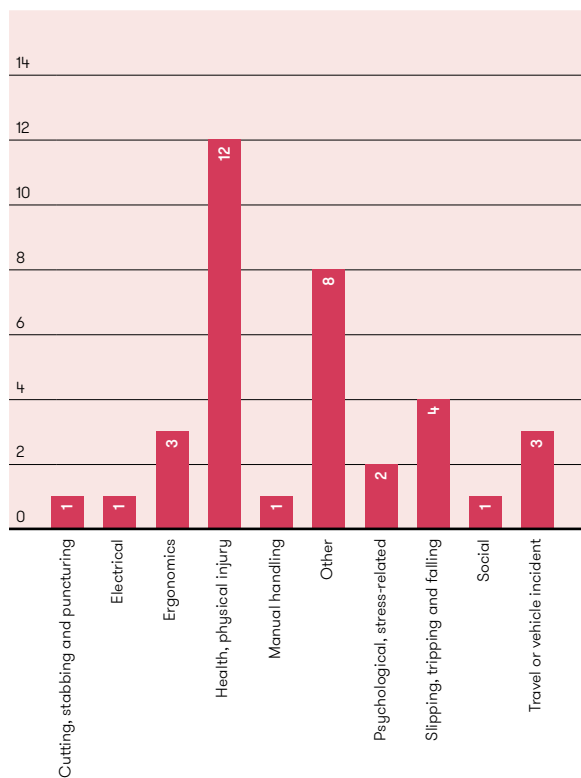


FIGURE 37: REPORTED INCIDENTS, HAZARDS AND NEAR MISSES—BY TYPE, 2020-21



STAFF WELLBEING SERVICES

The VEC continued to focus on delivery of a wellbeing program to support all staff in feeling safe, valued and respected at work.

Recognising the ongoing challenges to staff wellbeing through the pandemic, the wellbeing activities have focused on both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 wellbeing support.

The VEC utilised technology to promote wellbeing, including developing a dedicated Microsoft Teams Channel for the purpose of sharing wellbeing communications and creating a collaborative space for staff to discuss and share ideas and resources. Also articles and news items were shared on the VEC’s intranet and monthly all-staff newsletters were distributed.

Online technology was also used for the majority of wellbeing initiatives offered to all staff working remotely, enhancing opportunities for all staff to participate. The activities offered included:

- promotion and education of mental health and support seeking through R U OK? Day and World Mental Health Day
- a VEC-funded organisation pass at the Institute of Public Administration Australia’s International Women’s Day online event, made available to all staff
- a flu vaccination program with free on-site flu vaccinations offered to all staff. In addition, staff who were unable to attend the office and obtain a flu vaccination on-site were offered reimbursements for the cost of their vaccination
- promotion of men’s health
- celebration of International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, celebration of Harmony Week, including the development of a VEC Cookbook to showcase the diversity of VEC staff
- promotion of various wellbeing webinar series offered by WorkSafe Victoria and Vic Super.

The VEC Mental Health and Wellbeing Commitment Statement, introduced in 2018, remains active to provide clarity on the responsibilities and expectations of the VEC, managers and employees to prevent and address psychological injury or illness and contribute to a culture of positive wellbeing.

The wellbeing of staff and contractors has remained a priority with the increased promotion of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and extension of EAP services to contractors for the first time.

Support for people leaders through the Senior Leadership Group has continued, as has the use of regular staff communications focused on recognising their challenges, as well as corrective actions or services to overcome these challenges.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (CONT)

FIGURE 38: THE VEC'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST OHS MANAGEMENT MEASURES, 2016-17 TO 2020-21

MEASURE	KPI	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Incidents	Staff FTE (VPS only)	88.6 ¹	122.7	137	179.01	171.51
	Number of incidents	5 ²	10	16 ³	11	83
	Rate per 100 FTE	5.6	8.1	11.7	6.1	4.7
Claims	Number of standard claims	1 ⁴	1	1	2	-
	Rate per 100 FTE	1.1	0.8	0.7	1.1	-
	Number of lost time claims	-	-	1	1	-
	Rate per 100 FTE	-	-	0.7	0.5	-
	Number of claims exceeding 13 weeks	1	-	-	-	-
	Rate per 100 FTE	1.1	-	-	-	-
Fatalities	Fatality claims	-	-	-	-	-
Claim costs	Average cost per standard claim	8,210	452	479	706.18	-
Return to work (RTW)	Percentage of claims with RTW plan <30 days	-	-	-	-	-
Management	Evidence of OHS policy statement, OHS commitment objectives, regular reporting to senior management of OHS, and OHS plans (signed by CEO or equivalent)	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
	Evidence of OHS criteria in purchasing guidelines (including goods, services and personnel)	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed

MEASURE	KPI	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Consultation	Evidence of agreed structure of designated workgroups (DWGs), health and safety participation representatives (HSRs) and issue resolution procedures (IRPs)	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
	Compliance with agreed structure on DWGs, HSRs and IRPs	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Risk management	Percentage of internal audits/inspections conducted as planned	100%	75%	88%	50%	25%
	Percentage of issues identified and actioned arising from:					
	• internal audits	100%	N/A	100%	100%	100%
	• HSR provisional improvement notices (PINs)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	• WorkSafe notices	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Training	Percentage of managers and staff that have received OHS training:					
	• induction	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	• management training	100%	78%	0%	0%	0%
	• contractors, temps and visitors	50%	36%	9% ⁵	100%	100%
	Percentage of HSRs trained:					
	• acceptance of role	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	• refresher training	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
• reporting of incidents and injuries	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

¹ Figure does not include casual staff

² Figure does not include casual staff or members of the public

³ Figure does not include incidents incurred by casual staff or members of the public. Does not include hazards or near misses.

⁴ Figure includes casual election staff

⁵ Figure does not include casual election staff

Ivan Treisman

Management Accountant

Finance and Corporate
Governance



“ *The VEC can respond quickly to changing situations and so it is a pleasure to work within a dynamic team that is always focused on getting the job done.* ”

THE VEC’S VISION IS FOR ALL VICTORIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR DEMOCRACY. HOW DOES YOUR ROLE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

I am an accountant at the VEC, primarily involved with finance systems and budgets. My role contributes to the timely, accurate and transparent reporting of election events against budget and forward budget planning. This is important in enabling the VEC to best allocate its resources to deliver democratic elections to all Victorians, both now and in the future.

WHAT MAKES THE VEC AN INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING PLACE TO WORK?

No two election events are identical, due to ever changing legislation and elector preferences. This requires continual improvements in election delivery, and so I am always challenged to offer innovative reporting and accounting solutions. The VEC can respond quickly to changing situations and so it is a pleasure to work within a dynamic team that is always focused on getting the job done properly in a caring and supportive way.

DURING 2020-21, THE VEC CONDUCTED THE 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS. HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR ROLE?

I am working closely with the Elections Team designing reports to track and recover election costs from each of the local government councils. This process spans two financial years and will conclude when the local government compulsory voting enforcement program ends.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?

I spend most of the weekend with my family. You will often find me on long walks with our crazy dog or riding my bike when the weather is good.

Financial statements

ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21



Continued compliance with the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance — no reportable deficiencies.



Establishment of VEC corporate compliance framework to enhance compliance best practice.



Delivery of the VEC's programs and initiatives within the available funding envelope.



Successful delivery of the 2020 local government election program within budget.



Maturity and implementation of VEC social procurement strategy.

OUTLOOK 2021-22



Implementation of VEC financial sustainability strategy.



Embedding project governance framework to enhance program and project management practice.



Financial and corporate support to the 2022 State election program planning.



Implementing the new corporate compliance framework to manage new and evolving regulatory responsibilities.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The objective of the financial report is to provide stakeholders with an understanding of the VEC’s financial performance and position over the 2020-21 reporting period.

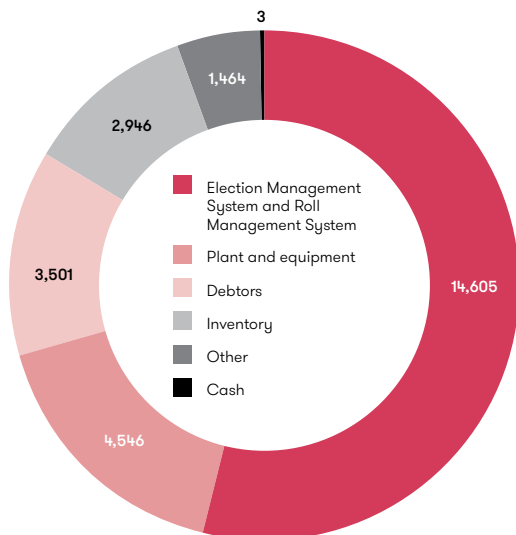
ASSETS – WHAT THE VEC OWNS

Non-financial assets make up the majority of the VEC’s assets. Assets include debtor receivables, election inventory including PPE, plant and equipment, and intangible assets, which cover all VEC systems and programs. The organisation continued to invest in the IT environment over the year with the delivery and launch of a new VEC website, enhancements to the Funding and Disclosure system, further improvements to VEC cyber security and continued work on the new Election Management System (EMS2). EMS2 is scheduled for completion towards the end of 2021 which will then trigger the decommissioning of EMS1.

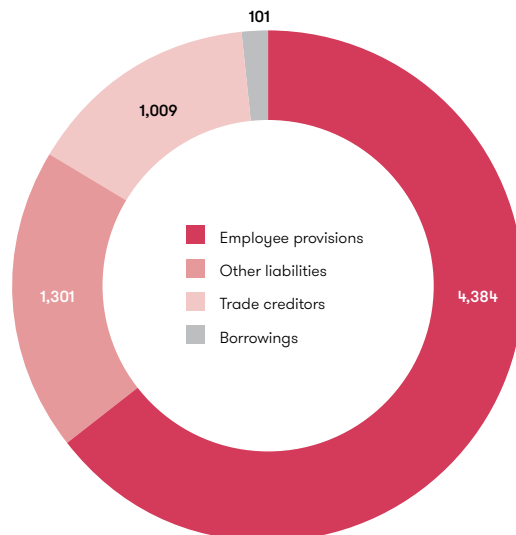
LIABILITIES – WHAT THE VEC OWES

The VEC’s liabilities are largely represented by employee provisions (annual leave and long service leave owing to staff) and supplier commitments. Money owed to suppliers and creditors was timing related at 30 June 2021, based on terms of trade between the VEC and respective suppliers. Utilising strong internal cash flow management, the VEC endeavours to keep outstanding supplier commitments to a minimum—ensuring payments are made within agreed trade terms. Trade creditor balances owing at 30 June 2021 were subsequently cleared the following month. The impact of COVID-19 meant staff were unable to book holidays and take leave, causing staff entitlement provision to increase considerably in comparison to previous reporting periods. The liability is being monitored and managed by VEC management.

VEC ASSETS (\$'000)



VEC LIABILITIES (\$'000)



EQUITY - WHAT THE VEC IS WORTH

The VEC’s equity is measured as the net of its assets less its liabilities. The VEC’s total equity position at 30 June 2021 is \$20.27 million, comprising contributed capital and carrying accumulated deficit.

FUNDING FLUCTUATIONS

The VEC’s only source of funding is its special appropriation from the State Government. The VEC’s funding fluctuates year-on-year depending on the electoral activity being delivered (see Figure 39). Every two years, the VEC conducts either a State election or local government elections, which significantly increase the VEC’s funding for the particular year. With 2020-21 being an election year, the VEC’s funding increased to \$74.95 million (2019-20: \$37.54 million). Special appropriation funding does not include non-cash expenses, such as depreciation, staff entitlement provisions and year-end accruals.

EXPENSES - HOW THE VEC’S FUNDING IS UTILISED

In addition to the VEC standard operating costs, the additional funding received was committed towards the 2020 local government election program. The major cost categories where resources were committed included:

- wages and overheads – upscaling election workforce, casuals and election officials
- election advertising and awareness campaigns
- ballot paper printing and distribution
- election logistics
- mail and postage services
- election office accommodation and rental
- election infrastructure including IT and security
- PPE equipment in support of COVIDSafe practices

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The VEC also manages administrative services on behalf of the State Government and local government. Funding collected and dispersed during 2020-21 was \$45.40 million. This is not shown in the VEC financial results or in the financial statements, but is declared in Note 4.1: Administered (non-controlled) items. This included:

- collection and distribution of fines
- advance payment of 2020 State election public funding
- administrative expenditure funding (Funding and Disclosure legislation).

VEC OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE (\$'000)

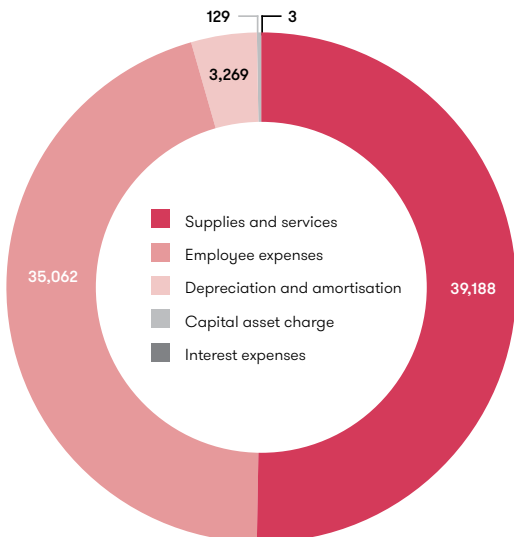
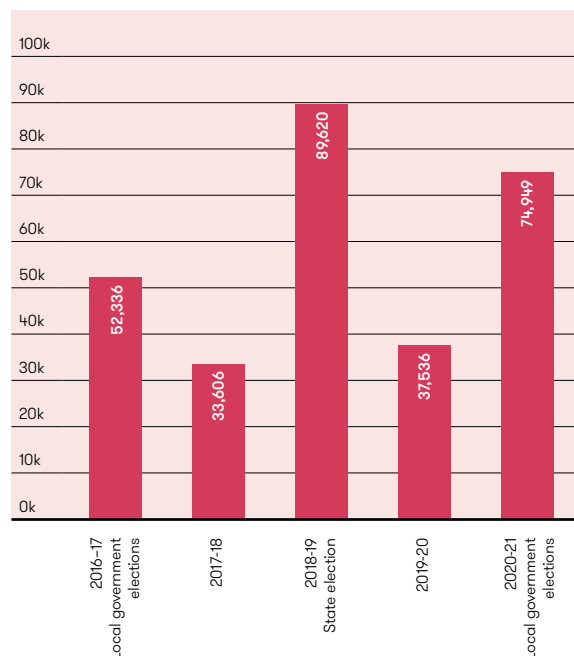


FIGURE 39: SPECIAL APPROPRIATION 2016-17 TO 2020-21 (\$'000)



DECLARATION IN THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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

We further state that, in our opinion, the information set out in the comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, cash flow statement and accompanying position of the Commission is correct as at 30 June 2021.

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

We authorise the attached financial statements for issue on 12 August 2021.



Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner
Victorian Electoral Commission
Melbourne 12 August 2021



Binh Le
Chief Financial Officer
Victorian Electoral Commission
Melbourne 12 August 2021

COMPREHENSIVE OPERATING STATEMENT

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

	NOTES	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Continuing operations			
Income from transactions			
Special appropriations	2.1	74,949	37,536
Total income from transactions		74,949	37,536
Expenses from transactions			
Employee expenses	3.1.1	(35,062)	(19,946)
Depreciation and amortisation	5.1.1	(3,269)	(3,916)
Interest expense		(3)	(195)
Capital asset charge	3.2	(129)	(129)
Other operating expenses	3.3	(39,188)	(14,390)
Total expenses from transactions		(77,651)	(38,576)
Net result from transactions (net operating balance)		(2,702)	(1,040)
Other economic flows included in net result			
Net gain/(loss) arising from revaluation of long service liability		86	74
Total other economic flows included in net result		86	74
Net result		(2,616)	(966)
Comprehensive result		(2,616)	(966)

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

BALANCE SHEET

as at 30 June 2021

	NOTES	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Assets			
Financial assets			
Cash and deposits	7.1	3	-
Receivables	6.1	3,501	1,424
Total financial assets		3,504	1,424
Non-financial assets			
Inventories	6.3	2,946	3,509
Property, plant and equipment	5.1	4,546	4,465
Intangible assets	5.2	14,605	12,964
Prepayments	6.4	1,464	1,637
Total non-financial assets		23,561	22,575
Total assets		27,065	23,999
Liabilities			
Payables	6.2	1,009	1,421
Borrowings		101	111
Employee-related provisions	3.1.2	4,384	3,525
Other provisions	6.5	1,301	1,063
Total liabilities		6,795	6,120
Net assets		20,270	17,879
Equity			
Accumulated (deficit)/surplus		(33,892)	(31,276)
Contributed capital		54,162	49,155
Net worth		20,270	17,879

The balance sheet should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

	NOTES	ACCUMULATED SURPLUS \$'000	CONTRIBUTED CAPITAL \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
Balance at 1 July 2019		(30,310)	42,444	12,134
Net result for the year		(966)	-	(966)
Other transfers			232	232
Capital appropriations	9.8	-	6,479	6,479
Balance at 30 June 2020		(31,276)	49,155	17,879
Net result for the year		(2,616)	-	(2,616)
Capital appropriations	9.8	-	5,007	5,007
Balance at 30 June 2021		(33,892)	54,162	20,270

The statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

	NOTES	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts			
Receipts from Government		74,938	37,577
Net goods and services tax recovered from the ATO		-	1,631
Total receipts		74,938	39,208
Payments			
Payments to suppliers and employees		(73,110)	(38,482)
Net goods and services tax paid to the ATO	(i)	(2,066)	-
Interest and other costs of finance paid		(3)	(195)
Total payments		(75,179)	(38,677)
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities	7.1	(241)	531
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchases of non-financial assets		(4,753)	(6,060)
Net cash flows (used in)/from investing activities		(4,753)	(6,060)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Owner contributions by State Government		5,007	6,479
Repayment of finance leases		(10)	(948)
Net cash flows from/(used in) financing activities		4,997	5,531
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		3	2
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		-	(2)
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	7.1	3	-

The above cash flow statement should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Note: (i) goods and services tax paid to the ATO is presented on a net basis

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

NOTE 1: ABOUT THIS REPORT

The VEC is an independent body of the State of Victoria, established pursuant to an order made by the Premier under the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Its principal address is:

Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

The VEC is an administrative agency acting on behalf of the Crown.

A description of the nature of the VEC's operations and its principal activities is included in the report of operations which does not form part of these financial statements.

The VEC is funded by accrual-based parliamentary appropriations for the provision of outputs. It provides on a fee-for-service basis election services for Local Government and Commercial elections. The fees charged for these services are determined by prevailing market forces.

Basis of preparation

These financial statements cover the VEC as an individual reporting entity and include all of its controlled activities.

These financial statements are presented in Australian dollars, and prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the note associated with the item measured on a different basis.

The accrual basis of accounting has been applied in the preparation of these financial statements whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid. The only exception is for special appropriation revenue, which is recognised on a cash basis when the amount appropriated for a specific purpose is received by the VEC.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about financial information being presented. The significant judgements made in the preparation of these financial statements are disclosed in the notes where amounts affected by these judgements are disclosed. Estimates and associated assumptions are based on professional judgements derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of the Australian Accounting Standards (AAS) that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates relate to:

- the fair value of measurement of property, plant and equipment (refer to 5.1)
- superannuation contributions (refer to 3.1.3)
- employee and provisions (refer to 3.1.1 and 3.1.2)
- useful lives of property, plant and equipment (refer to 5.1.1)

All amounts in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, unless otherwise stated.

Compliance information

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994* and applicable AASs which include Interpretations, issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB). In particular, they are presented in a manner consistent with the requirements of the AASB I 049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial reporting*.

Where appropriate, those AAS paragraphs applicable to not-for-profit entities have been applied.

Accounting policies are selected in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

NOTE 2: FUNDING DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICES

Introduction

The VEC's purpose is to deliver high-quality, accessible electoral services with innovation, integrity and independence to enable all Victorians to actively participate in the democratic process.

Objectives

The VEC's overall objective is to provide election services to State and Local Government, as well as conducting various fee-for-service elections.

To enable the VEC to fulfil its objectives and outputs, it receives parliamentary appropriations.

2.1 Summary of income that funds the delivery of services

	NOTES	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Special appropriations	2.2	74,949	37,536
Total income from transactions		74,949	37,536

2.2 Appropriations

Annual parliamentary appropriations income becomes controlled and is recognised by the VEC when it is appropriated from the Consolidated Fund by the Victorian Parliament, via the Department of Premier and Cabinet and applied for the purposes defined under the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Special appropriations

The appropriation revenue is recognised upon receipt when the operating bank account is funded by the State Government.

NOTE 3: THE COST OF DELIVERING SERVICES

Introduction

This section provides an account of the expenses incurred by the VEC in delivering services and outputs. In Note 2, the funds that enable the provision of services were disclosed and in this note the costs associated with provision of services are recorded.

3.1 Expenses incurred in delivery of services

	NOTES	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Employee expenses	3.1.1	35,062	19,946
Capital asset charge	3.2	129	129
Other operating expenses	3.3	39,188	14,390
Total expenses incurred in delivery of services		74,379	34,465

3.1.1 Employee benefits in the comprehensive operating statement

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Defined benefit and contribution superannuation expense	2,650	1,585
Salaries and wages, annual leave and long service leave	32,412	18,361
Total employee expenses	35,062	19,946

Employee expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, superannuation, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, redundancy payments and WorkCover premiums.

The amount recognised in the comprehensive operating statement in relation to superannuation is employer contributions for members for both defined benefit and defined contribution superannuation plans that are paid or payable during the reporting period.

The VEC does not recognise any defined benefit liability in respect of the plan(s) because the entity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay future benefits relating to its employees; its only obligation is to pay superannuation contributions as they fall due. The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) discloses the State's defined benefit liabilities in its disclosure for administered items.

3.1.2 Employee benefits in the balance sheet

Provision is made for benefits accruing to employees in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave for services rendered to the reporting date.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Current provisions		
Annual leave (i)		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	1,002	1,292
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months (ii)	814	26
Long service leave (i)		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	117	137
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months (ii)	1,203	1,208
	3,136	2,663
Provisions for on-costs (i)		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	170	217
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months (ii)	306	188
	476	405
Total current employee-related provisions	3,612	3,068
Non-current provisions (ii)		
Employee benefits (i)	670	397
On-costs	102	60
Total non-current employee-related provisions	772	457
Total employee-related provisions	4,384	3,525

Note:

(i) Employee benefits consist of annual leave and long service leave accrued by employees. On-costs such as payroll tax and workers compensation insurance are not employee benefits and are reflected as a separate provision.

(ii) Amounts are measured at present values.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

Reconciliation of movement in on-cost provision

	2021 \$'000
Opening balance	465
Additional provisions recognised	1,494
Reductions arising from payments/other sacrifices of future economic benefits	(1,381)
Closing balance	578
Current	476
Non-current	102
Total employee benefits	578

Annual leave

Liabilities for annual leave and on-costs are recognised as part of the employee benefit provision as current liabilities. Liabilities expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting period are measured at undiscounted amounts. Liabilities that are not expected to be settled within 12 months are also recognised in the provision for employee benefits as current liabilities, but are measured at present value of the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement.

Employment on-costs such as payroll tax, workers compensation and superannuation are not employee benefits. They are disclosed separately as a provision for employee benefits when the employment to which they relate has occurred.

Long service leave

Liability for long service leave (LSL) is recognised in the provision for employee benefits.

Unconditional LSL is disclosed in the notes to the financial statements as a current liability, even where the VEC does not expect to settle the liability within 12 months because it will not have the unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement should an employee take leave within 12 months.

The components of this current LSL are measured at:

- undiscounted value – if the VEC expects to wholly settle within 12 months; or
- present value – if the VEC does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

Conditional LSL is disclosed as a non-current liability.

There is an unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement until the employee has completed the requisite years of service. This non-current LSL liability is measured at present value.

Any gain or loss following revaluation of the present value of non-current LSL liability is recognised as a transaction, except to the extent that a gain or loss arises due to changes in bond interest rates for which it is then recognised as other economic flows included in the net result.

3.1.3 Superannuation contributions

Employees of the VEC are entitled to receive superannuation benefits and the VEC contributes to both defined benefit and defined contribution plans. The defined benefit plan(s) provides benefits based on years of service and final average salary.

As noted in 3.1.1, the defined benefit liability is recognised in DTF as an administered liability. However, superannuation contributions paid or payable for the reporting period are included as part of employee benefits in the comprehensive operating statement of the VEC.

The name, details and amounts expensed in relation to the major employee superannuation funds and contributions made by the VEC are outlined below.

	PAID CONTRIBUTION FOR THE YEAR	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Defined benefit plans		
State superannuation fund—revised and new (i)	41	55
Defined contribution plans		
VicSuper	977	623
Other	1,632	907
Total	2,650	1,585

Notes: (i) The basis for determining the level of contributions is determined by the various actuaries of the defined benefit superannuation plans.

There were no outstanding contributions at year end.

3.2 Capital asset charge

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Capital asset charge	129	129

A capital asset charge is a charge levied on the written down value of controlled non-current physical assets in the VEC's balance sheet. It aims to attribute to the VEC outputs a cost of capital used in service delivery. Imposing this charge provided incentives for the VEC to identify and dispose of underutilised or surplus non-current physical assets.

3.3 Other operating expenses

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Purchase of supplies and consumables	6,165	1,040
Purchase of services	24,904	9,701
Maintenance	1,134	1,413
Accommodation expenses	6,985	2,236
Total other operating expenses	39,188	14,390

Other operating expenses generally represent the day-to-day running costs incurred in normal operations and are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

NOTE 4: ADMINISTERED FINANCIAL INFORMATION OUTPUT

4.1 Administered (non-controlled) items

In addition to the specific VEC operations which are included in the financial statements (comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, and cash flow statement), the VEC administers or manages, but does not control, other activities and resources on behalf of the State and

Local Government. Administered income includes the provision of services for conducting Local Government elections, fines and electoral entitlements. Administered expenses include payments made in conducting Local Government elections, payments to Councils and payments for Administrative Expenditure, Policy Development and Advance Public funding.

Administered assets include government income earned but not yet collected.

	STATE		LOCAL GOVERNMENT		TOTAL	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Administered income from transactions						
Income from elections	27,357	1,335	-	-	27,357	1,335
Fines	473	2,271	5,336	3,162	5,809	5,433
Candidate deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-
Electoral entitlements	11,955	12,135	-	-	11,955	12,135
Receipts for Funding and Disclosure	275	175	-	-	275	175
Total administered income from transactions	40,060	15,916	5,336	3,162	45,396	19,078
Administered expenses from transactions						
Payments into the consolidated fund	21,251	3,951	-	-	21,251	3,951
Payments to councils	-	-	3,127	3,215	3,127	3,215
Payments for Funding and Disclosure	6,489	6,383	-	-	6,489	6,383
Total administered expenses from transactions	27,740	10,334	3,127	3,215	30,867	13,549
Total administered net result from transactions (net operating balance)	12,320	5,582	2,209	(53)	14,529	5,529
Administered assets						
Cash	-	-	2,782	784	2,782	784
Receivables	6,746	-	-	-	6,746	-
Advanced funding	24,452	18,729	-	-	24,452	18,729
Total administered assets	31,198	18,729	2,782	784	33,980	19,513
Administered liabilities						
Payables	560	411	-	-	560	411
Compulsory voting fines	-	-	2,782	784	2,782	784
Total administered liabilities	560	411	2,782	784	3,342	1,195
Total administered net assets	30,638	18,318	0	0	30,638	18,318

NOTE 5: KEY ASSETS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT OUTPUT DELIVERY

Introduction

The VEC controls property, intangibles, plant and equipment that are used in fulfilling its objectives and conducting its activities. They represent the resources that have been entrusted to the VEC to be utilised for delivery of those outputs.

5.1 Total property, plant and equipment (i)

	GROSS CARRYING AMOUNT		ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION		NET CARRYING AMOUNT	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Property, plant and equipment at fair value	8,564	7,176	(5,603)	(4,516)	2,961	2,660
Leasehold improvements	6,372	6,133	(4,787)	(4,328)	1,585	1,805
Net carrying amount	14,936	13,309	(10,390)	(8,844)	4,546	4,465

Initial recognition

All non-financial physical assets are measured initially at cost and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment.

The cost of leasehold improvements is capitalised as an asset and amortised over the shorter of the remaining term of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvements.

The initial cost for non-financial physical assets under a finance lease is measured at amounts equal to the fair value of the leased asset or, if lower, the present value of the minimum lease payments, each determined at the inception of the lease.

Fair value of plant and equipment that are specialised in use (such that it is rarely sold other than as a part of a going concern) is determined using the current replacement cost method.

Refer to Note 8.3 for additional information on fair value determination of plant and equipment.

Impairment of property, plant and equipment

The recoverable amount of primarily non-cash-generating assets of not-for-profit entities, which are typically specialised in nature and held for continuing use of their service capacity, is expected to be materially the same as fair value determined under AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement, with the consequence that AASB 136 does not apply to such assets that are regularly revalued.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

5.1.1 Depreciation and amortisation

CHARGE FOR THE PERIOD (i)	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Property, plant and equipment	1,591	1,781
Right of use assets – buildings	-	1,171
Intangible assets	1,678	964
Total depreciation and amortisation	3,269	3,916

Note: (i) The table incorporates depreciation of right of use assets Under AASB /6 Leases which was applied from 1 July 2019 until 31 October 2019. In November 2019, through a Machinery of Government (MOG) directive, the VEC was advised that the right-of-use assets were to be transferred to the Department of Treasury (DTF) under the Centralised Accommodation Management (CAM) initiative.

All property, plant and equipment and other non-financial physical assets (excluding items under operating leases) that have finite useful lives are depreciated. Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis, at rates that allocate the asset's value, less any estimated residual value, over its estimated useful life.

Intangible produced assets with finite lives are amortised as an 'expense from transactions' on a straight-line basis over their useful lives.

The estimated useful lives, residual values and depreciation method are reviewed at the end of each annual reporting period, and adjustments made where appropriate.

The following are typical estimated useful lives for the different asset classes for current and prior years.

ASSET CLASS	USEFUL LIFE (YEARS)
Leasehold improvements	10-12
Leased motor vehicles	3
Plant and equipment	5-10
Furniture and fittings	5-14
Computer equipment and software	3-7
Intangible produced assets— software development	14-16

5.1.2 Reconciliation of movements in carrying amounts of property, plant, equipment and vehicles (i)

	PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT AT FAIR VALUE		LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS		TOTAL	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Opening balance	2,660	2,495	1,805	2,250	4,465	4,745
Additions	1,450	1,144	238	389	1,688	1,533
Disposals	(16)	(32)	-	-	(16)	(32)
Depreciation	(1,133)	(947)	(458)	(834)	(1,591)	(1,781)
Closing balance	2,961	2,660	1,585	1,805	4,546	4,465

5.2 Intangible assets

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Gross carrying amount		
Opening balance	29,894	24,948
Addition from internal development	3,319	4,946
Closing balance	33,213	29,894
Accumulated amortisation		
Opening balance	(16,930)	(15,966)
Amortisation expense (i)	(1,678)	(964)
Closing balance	(18,608)	(16,930)
Net book value	14,605	12,964

Note: (i) The consumption of intangible produced assets is included in 'depreciation and amortisation' line item on the Comprehensive Operating Statement

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

5.2.1 Reconciliation of movements in carrying amounts of intangibles

	SOFTWARE		WORK IN PROGRESS		TOTAL	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Opening balance	9,593	7,775	3,371	1,207	12,964	8,982
Additions	-	-	3,319	4,946	3,319	4,946
Transfer to software	3,276	2,782	(3,276)	(2,782)	-	-
Amortisation	(1,678)	(964)	-	-	(1,678)	(964)
Closing balance	11,191	9,593	3,414	3,371	14,605	12,964

Initial recognition

Purchased intangible assets are initially recognised at cost. When the recognition criteria in AASB 138 *Intangible Assets* are met, internally generated intangible assets are recognised at cost. Subsequently, intangible assets with finite useful lives are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses. Depreciation and amortisation begins when the asset is available for use, that is, when it is in the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

An internally generated intangible asset arising from development (or from the development phase of an internal project) is recognised if, and only if, all of the following are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the intangible asset so that it will be available for use or sale
- an intention to complete the intangible asset and use or sell it
- the ability to use or sell the intangible asset
- the intangible asset will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the intangible asset
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the intangible asset during its development.

Subsequent measurement

Intangible produced assets with finite useful lives are amortised as an 'expense from transactions' on a straight-line basis over their useful lives. Produced intangible assets have useful lives of 14-16 years.

Intangible non-produced assets with finite useful lives are amortised as an 'other economic flow' on a straight-line basis over their useful lives. The amortisation period is 14-16 years.

Impairment of intangible assets

All intangible assets with indefinite useful lives are not depreciated or amortised, but are tested for impairment by comparing its recoverable amount with its carrying amount:

- annually
- whenever there is an indication that the intangible asset may be impaired.

Intangible assets with finite useful lives are tested for impairment whenever an indication of impairment is identified.

Significant intangible assets

The VEC has capitalised software development expenditure for the development of its election management and electoral rolls development. The carrying amount of the capitalised software development expenditure of \$14.6 million (2020: \$13.0 million) includes existing developed software and software under development.

NOTE 6. OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

This section sets out those assets and liabilities that arose from the VEC's controlled operations.

6.1 Receivables

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Current receivables		
Statutory		
GST input tax credit recoverable	767	1,287
	767	1,287
Contractual		
Other receivables	2,734	137
	2,734	137
Total current receivables	3,501	1,424
Total receivables	3,501	1,424

Contractual receivables are classified as financial instruments and categorised as 'financial assets at amortised costs'. They are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. The VEC holds the contractual receivables with the objective to collect the contractual cash flows, and therefore subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment. They include mainly debtors in relation to goods and services.

Statutory receivables do not arise from contracts and are recognised and measured similarly to contractual receivables (except for impairment), but are not classified as financial instruments for disclosure purposes. The VEC applies AASB 9 for initial measurement of the statutory receivables and as a result statutory receivables are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction cost. They include predominantly amounts owing from the Victorian government and GST input tax credits recoverable.

All receivables are neither past due nor impaired.

6.2 Payables

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Current payables		
Contractual		
Supplies and services (i)	975	1,357
Other payables	34	64
Total current payables	1,009	1,421
Total payables	1,009	1,421

Note: (i) The average credit period is 30 days. No interest is charged on payables.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

Contractual payables are classified as financial instruments and measured at amortised cost. Accounts payable represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the VEC prior to the end of the financial year that are unpaid.

Maturity analysis of contractual payables (i)

	CARRYING AMOUNT \$'000	NOMINAL AMOUNT \$'000	MATURITY DATES	
			LESS THAN 1 MONTH \$'000	1-3 MONTHS \$'000
2020 Payables				
Trade and other payables	1,421	1,421	1,421	-
Total	1,421	1,421	1,421	-
2021 Payables				
Trade and other payables	1,009	1,009	1,009	-
Total	1,009	1,009	1,009	-

Notes: (i) Maturity analysis is presented using the contractual undiscounted cash flows.

6.3 Inventories

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Current inventories		
Supplies and consumables		
At cost	2,946	3,509
Total inventories	2,946	3,509

Inventories include goods and other property for distribution at zero or nominal cost, or for consumption in the ordinary course of business operations. Inventories held for distribution are measured at cost, adjusted for any loss of service potential. Costs for all other inventory is measured on the basis of weighted average cost. Bases used in assessing loss of service potential for inventories held for distribution include current replacement cost and technical or functional obsolescence. Technical obsolescence occurs when an item still functions for some or all of the tasks it was originally acquired to do, but no longer matches existing technologies. Functional obsolescence occurs when an item no longer functions the way it did when it was first acquired.

6.4 Other non-financial assets

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Current other non-financial assets		
Prepayments	1,464	1,637
Total current other non-financial assets	1,464	1,637

Other non-financial assets include prepayments which represent payments in advance of receipt of goods or services or that part of expenditure made in one accounting period covering a term extending beyond that period.

6.5 Other provisions

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Non-current provisions		
Make good-provision (i)	1,301	1,063
Total other provisions	1,301	1,063

Note: (i) In accordance with the Centralised Accommodation Management agreement with the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF), VEC is required to provide for the removal of leasehold improvements from the occupied head office and warehouse facilities and restore the premises to its original condition at the end of the agreement term.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

NOTE 7: HOW THE VEC FINANCED ITS OPERATIONS

This section provides information on the sources of finance the VEC used during its operations, along with interest expense (the cost of borrowings) and other information related to financing the VEC's activities. This section includes disclosures of balances that are financial instruments (such as borrowings and cash balances).

7.1 Cash balances and cash flow information

Cash and deposits comprise cash on hand and cash at bank which are held for the purpose of meeting short-term cash commitments rather than for investment purposes, and which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Total cash and deposits disclosed in the balance sheet	3	-
Balance as per cash flow statement	3	-

The VEC does not hold a cash reserve in its bank accounts. Cash received from generation of income is generally paid into the State of Victoria bank account ('public account'). Similarly, VEC expenditure, including in the form of cheques drawn for the payments to its suppliers and creditors, are made via the public account. The public account remits to the VEC the cash required upon presentation of cheques by the VEC's suppliers or creditors.

These funding arrangements can result in the VEC having a notional shortfall in the cash at bank required for payment of unrepresented cheques at reporting date. At 30 June 2020, cash at bank included the notional shortfall for the payment of cheques. There were no unrepresented cheques at 30 June 2021.

7.1.1 Reconciliation of net result for the period to cash flow from operating activities

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Net result for the period	(2,616)	(966)
Non-cash movements		
(Gain)/loss on sale or disposal of non-current assets	-	-
Depreciation and amortisation of non-current assets	3,269	3,916
Other non-cash movements	-	(388)
Movements in assets and liabilities		
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	(2,077)	(826)
(Increase)/decrease in inventories	563	(1,080)
(Increase)/decrease in other non-financial assets	173	(450)
Increase/(decrease) in payables	(412)	249
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	859	935
Increase/(decrease) in other liabilities	-	(859)
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities	(241)	531

7.2 Commitments for expenditure

Commitments for future expenditure include operating and capital commitments arising from contracts. These commitments are recorded at their nominal value and inclusive of the goods and services tax (GST) payable. In addition, where it is considered appropriate and provides additional relevant information to users, the net present values of significant individual projects are stated. These future expenditures cease to be disclosed as commitments once the related liabilities are recognised in the balance sheet.

The following commitments have not been recognised as liabilities in the financial statements.

7.2.1 Total commitments payable

NOMINAL VALUE	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Other commitments (i)		
Less than one year	3,728	7,117
Longer than one year and not longer than five years	6,088	1,698
Total other commitments	9,816	8,815
Total commitments (inclusive of GST)	9,816	8,815
Less GST recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office	(892)	(801)
Total commitments (exclusive of GST)	8,924	8,014

Notes: (i) Other commitments include outsourcing contracts for joint electoral roll procedures and SSP Accommodation services at the end of the reporting period.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

NOTE 8: RISKS, CONTINGENCIES AND VALUATION JUDGEMENTS

The VEC is exposed to risk from its activities and outside factors. In addition, it is often necessary to make judgements and estimates associated with recognition and measurement of items in the financial statements. This section sets out financial instrument specific information (including exposures to financial risks), as well as those items that are contingent in nature or require a higher level of judgement to be applied, which for the VEC relates mainly to fair value determination.

8.1 Financial instruments specific disclosures

Introduction

Financial instruments arise out of contractual agreements that give rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Due to the nature of the VEC's activities, certain financial assets and financial liabilities arise under statute rather than a contract. Such financial assets and financial liabilities do not meet the definition of financial instruments in AASB 132 *Financial Instruments: Presentation*. For example, statutory receivables arising from taxes, fines and penalties do not meet the definition of financial instruments as they do not arise under contract. However, guarantees issued by the treasurer on behalf of the VEC are financial instruments because, although authorised under statute, the terms and conditions for each financial guarantee may vary and are subject to an agreement.

The VEC applies AASB 9 *Financial Instruments* and classifies all of its financial assets based on the business model for managing the assets and the asset's contractual terms.

Categories of financial assets

Financial assets at amortised cost

Financial assets are measured at amortised costs if both the following criteria are met and the assets are not designated as fair value through net result:

- the assets are held by the VEC to collect the contractual cash flows, and
- the assets contractual terms give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interests.

These assets are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less any impairment.

The VEC recognises the following assets in this category:

- cash and deposits
- receivables (excluding statutory receivables).

Categories of financial assets

Receivables and cash are financial instrument assets with fixed and determinable payments that are not quoted on an active market. They are initially measured at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial measurement, these are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment.

The VEC recognises the following assets in this category:

- cash and deposits
- receivables (excluding statutory receivables).

Categories of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially recognised on the date they are originated. They are initially measured at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial recognition, these financial instruments are measured at amortised cost with any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value being recognised in profit and loss over the period of the interest-bearing liability, using the effective interest rate method.

The VEC recognises the following liabilities in this category:

- payables (excluding statutory payables); and
- borrowings (including finance lease liabilities).

Derecognition of financial assets

A financial asset (or, where applicable, a part of a financial asset or part of a group of similar financial assets) is derecognised when:

- the rights to receive cash flows from the asset have expired; or
- the VEC retains the right to receive cash flows from the asset, but has assumed an obligation to pay them in full without material delay to a third party under a 'pass through' arrangement; or
- the VEC has transferred its rights to receive cash flows from the asset either:
 - has transferred substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset; or
 - has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset, but has transferred control of the asset.

Where the VEC has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards or transferred control, the asset is recognised to the extent of the VEC's continuing involvement in the asset.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

A financial liability is derecognised when the obligation under the liability is discharged, cancelled or expires.

When an existing financial liability is replaced by another from the same lender or substantially different terms, or the terms of an existing liability are substantially modified, such an exchange or modification is treated as a derecognition of the original liability and the recognition of a new liability. The difference in the respective carrying amounts is recognised as an 'other economic flow' in the comprehensive operating statement.

Reclassification of financial instruments

Subsequent to initial recognition reclassification of financial liabilities is not permitted. Financial assets are required to be reclassified between fair value through net result, fair value through other comprehensive income and amortised cost when, and only when, the VEC business model for managing its financial assets has changes such that its previous model would no longer apply.

However, the VEC is generally unable to change its business model because it is determined by the Performance Management Framework (PMF) and all Victorian government agencies are required to apply the PMF under the Standing Directions of the Assistant Treasurer 2018.

If under rare circumstances an asset is reclassified, the reclassification is applied prospectively from the reclassification date and previously recognised gains, losses or interest should not be restated. If the asset is reclassified to fair value, the fair value should be determined at the reclassification date and any gain or loss arising from a difference between the carrying amount and fair value is recognised in net result.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

8.1.1 Financial instruments: categorisation

	CASH AND DEPOSITS \$'000	FINANCIAL ASSETS AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	FINANCIAL LIABILITIES AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
2021				
Contractual financial assets				
Cash and deposits	3	-	-	3
Receivables (i)	2,734	-	-	2,734
Total contractual financial assets	2,737	-	-	2,737
Contractual financial liabilities				
Payables (i)	-	-	1,009	1,009
Borrowings	-	-	101	101
Total contractual financial liabilities	-	-	1,110	1,110

Note: (i) The total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian Government, GST input tax credit recoverable, and GST payables).

	CASH AND DEPOSITS \$'000	FINANCIAL ASSETS AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	FINANCIAL LIABILITIES AT AMORTISED COST \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
2020				
Contractual financial assets				
Cash and deposits	-	-	-	-
Receivables (i)	-	137	-	137
Total contractual financial assets	-	137	-	137
Contractual financial liabilities				
Payables (i)	-	-	1,421	1,421
Borrowings	-	-	111	111
Total contractual financial liabilities	-	-	1,532	1,532

Note: (i) The total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian Government, GST input tax credit recoverable, and GST payables).

8.1.2 Financial risk management objectives and policies

The main purpose in holding financial instruments is to prudentially manage the VEC's financial risks within the Government policy parameters.

The VEC's main financial risks include credit risk and liquidity risk. The VEC manages these financial risks in accordance with its financial risk management policy.

The VEC uses different methods to measure and manage the different risks to which it is exposed. Primary responsibility for the identification and management of financial risks rests with the Electoral Commissioner in consultation with the Audit and Risk Committee.

Financial instruments: Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the VEC would be unable to meet its financial obligations as and when they fall due. The VEC operates under the Government fair payments policy of settling financial obligations within 30 days and in the event of a dispute, making payments within 30 days from the date of resolution.

The VEC's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed in the balance sheet. The VEC's exposure to liquidity risk is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

Financial instruments: Credit risk

Credit risk arises from the contractual financial assets of the VEC, which comprise cash and deposits, and non-statutory receivables. The VEC's exposure to credit risk arises from the potential default of a counter party on their contractual obligations resulting in financial loss to the VEC. Credit risk is measured at fair value and is monitored on a regular basis.

In addition, the VEC does not engage in hedging for its contractual financial assets and mainly obtains contractual financial assets that are on fixed interest, except for cash assets, which are mainly cash at bank. As with the policy for debtors, the VEC's policy is to only deal with banks with high credit ratings.

Provision of impairment for contractual financial assets is recognised when there is objective evidence that the VEC will not be able to collect a receivable. Objective evidence includes financial difficulties of the debtor, default payments, debts which are more than 60 days overdue, and changes in debtor credit ratings.

The carrying amount of contractual financial assets recorded in the financial statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents the VEC's maximum exposure to credit risk without taking account of the value of any collateral obtained. The VEC is not exposed to any material credit risk at balance date.

There has been no material change to the VEC's credit risk profile in 2020-21.

Financial instruments: Market risk

The VEC's exposures to market risk are primarily through foreign currency risk. Objectives, policies and processes used to manage this risk are disclosed below.

Foreign currency risk

The VEC is exposed to foreign currency risk mainly through its payables relating to purchases of supplies and consumables from overseas. This is because of a limited amount of transactions denominated in foreign currencies and a relatively short time-frame between commitment and settlement.

Based on past and current assessment of economic outlook, it is deemed unnecessary for the VEC to enter into any hedging arrangements to manage the risk.

The VEC is not exposed to any material foreign currency risk.

Interest rate risk

Fair value interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. The VEC does not hold any interest-bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk.

Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates.

The VEC has no exposure to cash flow interest rate risks as cash is non-interest bearing.

The VEC's financial assets and liabilities are all non-interest bearing, except finance leases which are at fixed interest rates.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

8.2 Contingent assets and contingent liabilities

Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the balance sheet, but are disclosed and, if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable respectively.

Contingent assets

Contingent assets are possible assets that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity.

These are classified as either quantifiable, where the potential economic benefit is known, or non-quantifiable.

Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:

- possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity, or
- present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:
 - it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligations or
 - the amount of the obligations cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Contingent liabilities are also classified as either quantifiable or non-quantifiable. There are no contingent assets or contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2021 (2020: Nil).

8.3 Fair value determination

Significant judgement: Fair value measurements of assets and liabilities

Consistent with AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement, the VEC determines the policies and procedures for both recurring fair value measurements such as property, plant and equipment and financial instruments, in accordance with the requirements of AASB 13 and the relevant Financial Reporting Directions.

Fair value determination requires judgement and the use of assumptions. This section discloses the most significant assumptions used in determining fair values. Changes to assumptions could have a material impact on the results and financial position of the VEC.

This section sets out information on how the VEC determined fair value for financial reporting purposes. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

The following assets and liabilities are carried at fair value:

- property, plant and equipment.

In addition, the fair values of other assets and liabilities that are carried at amortised cost also need to be determined for disclosure purposes.

The VEC determines the policies and procedures for determining fair values for both financial and non-financial assets and liabilities as required.

Fair value hierarchy

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy, described as follows, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole:

- Level 1 - Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
- Level 2 - Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable and
- Level 3 - Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, the VEC has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

In determining fair values a number of inputs are used. The VEC uses only Level 3 unobservable inputs.

- Level 3 - valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

How this section is structured

For those assets and liabilities for which fair values are determined, the following disclosures are provided:

- carrying amount and the fair value (which would be the same for those assets measured at fair value)
- which level of the fair value hierarchy was used to determine the fair value; and
- in respect of those assets and liabilities subject to fair value determination using Level 3 inputs:
 - a reconciliation of the movements in fair values from the beginning of the year to the end and
 - details of significant unobservable inputs used in the fair value determination.

This section is divided between disclosures in connection with fair value determination for financial instruments (refer to Note 8.3.1) and non-financial physical assets (refer to Note 8.3.2).

8.3.1 Fair value determination of financial assets and liabilities

The fair values and net fair values of financial assets and liabilities are determined as follows:

- Level 1 - the fair value of financial instrument with standard terms and conditions and traded in active liquid markets are determined with reference to quoted market prices;
- Level 2 - the fair value is determined using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the financial asset or liability, either directly or indirectly; and
- Level 3 - the fair value is determined in accordance with generally accepted pricing models based on discounted cash flow analysis using unobservable market inputs.

The VEC considers that the carrying amount of financial instrument assets and liabilities recorded in the financial statements to be a fair approximation of their fair values, because of the short-term nature of the financial instruments and the expectation that they will be paid in full.

8.3.2 Fair value determination: Non-financial physical assets

Fair value measurement hierarchy for assets as at 30 June 2021

	CARRYING AMOUNT		FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENT AT THE END OF REPORTING PERIOD:					
	2021	2020	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
			(i)	(i)	(i)	(i)	(i)	(i)
	2021	2020	2021	2021	2021	2020	2020	2020
Property, plant and equipment at fair value	4,546	4,465			4,546			4,465
Total of property, plant and equipment at fair value	4,546	4,465			4,546			4,465

Note: (i) Classified in accordance with the fair value hierarchy, see Note 8.3.1

Plant, equipment, fixtures and fittings and vehicles

Plant, equipment, fixtures & fittings and equipment are held at fair value. When plant and equipment is specialised in use, such that it is rarely sold other than as part of a going concern, fair value is determined using the current replacement cost method.

There have been no transfers between levels during the period.

There were no changes in valuation techniques throughout the period to 30 June 2021.

For all assets measured at fair value, the current use is considered the highest and best use.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

Reconciliation of Level 3 fair value movements

	PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT (\$'000)
2021	
Opening balance	4,465
Purchases (sales)	1,688
Disposals	(16)
Depreciations	(1,591)
Closing balance	4,546
2020	
Opening balance	4,745
Purchases (sales)	1,533
Disposals	(32)
Depreciations	(1,781)
Closing balance	4,465

Description of significant unobservable inputs to Level 3 valuations

	VALUATION TECHNIQUE	SIGNIFICANT UNOBSERVABLE INPUTS
Plant, equipment, fixtures and fittings and vehicles	Current replacement cost	Useful life

NOTE 9: OTHER DISCLOSURES

Introduction

This section includes additional material disclosures required by accounting standards or otherwise, for the understanding of this financial report.

STRUCTURE

- 9.1 Ex-gratia expenses
- 9.2 Economic dependency
- 9.3 Responsible persons
- 9.4 Remuneration of executives
- 9.5 Related parties
- 9.6 Remuneration of auditors
- 9.7 Subsequent events
- 9.8 Other accounting policies
- 9.9 Australian Accounting Standards issued that are not yet effective
- 9.10 Glossary of technical terms and style conventions

9.1 Ex-gratia expenses

The VEC made no ex-gratia payments during the reporting period. (2020: Nil)

9.2 Economic dependency

The Victorian Electoral Commission is dependent upon the State of Victoria, via the Department of Premier and Cabinet, for the funding of its operations. At the date of this report, management has no reason to believe that this financial support will not continue.

9.3 Responsible persons

In accordance with the Ministerial Directions issued by the Assistant Treasurer under the *Financial Management Act 1994*, the following disclosures are made regarding responsible persons for the reporting period.

Section 7 of the *Electoral Act 2002* states that the 'Commission (the VEC) consists of one member being the person who is appointed as the Electoral Commissioner'. Section 10 of the *Electoral Act 2002* also states that the VEC is not subject to the direction or control of the Minister in respect of the performance of its responsibilities and functions and the exercise of its powers, therefore the accountable officer including a person delegated to act in this capacity by the VEC is listed below.

Section 16(2) - Functions, powers and duties of the *Electoral Act 2002* states that 'if the Electoral Commissioner is absent or unavailable to discharge the duties of his or her office or the office of Electoral Commissioner is temporarily vacant, the Deputy Electoral Commissioner has the duty to act in the office of Electoral Commissioner in which case the Deputy Electoral Commissioner has all the functions, powers and duties specified in subsection (1) being the functions, powers and duties of the Electoral Commissioner as delegated by the Commission (the VEC).

Names

Responsible Minister

The Hon. Danny Pearson MP
Minister for Government Services
Minister for Regulatory Reform
Minister for Creative Industries
Assistant Treasurer

Accountable Officers

Mr Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner - Accountable Officer
1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

Ms Elizabeth Williams
Deputy Electoral Commissioner
1 July 2020 to 30 April 2021

Remuneration of Responsible Persons

Remuneration received or receivable by the accountable officer in connection with the management of the VEC during the reporting period was in the range, as shown on the following page.

The Responsible Persons, excluding ministers, received remuneration for the financial year ended 30 June 2021. The number of Responsible Persons who received remuneration in connection with the affairs of the VEC is displayed on the following page.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

INCOME BAND	TOTAL REMUNERATION 30 JUNE 2021 NO.	TOTAL REMUNERATION 30 JUNE 2020 NO.
\$230,000-\$235,999	1	-
\$270,000-\$279,999	-	1
\$370,000-\$379,999	1	1
Total number of responsible persons	2	2
	\$'000	\$'000
Total remuneration received, or due and receivable by Responsible Persons from VEC Services for the financial period:	617	646

9.4 Remuneration of executives

There were no other Executive Officers with key management responsibilities in the 2020-21 financial year. (2020: Nil)

9.5 Related parties

The VEC is a wholly owned and controlled entity of the State of Victoria.

Related parties of the VEC include:

- all key management personnel and their close family members and personal business interests (controlled entities, joint ventures and entities they have significant influence over)
- all cabinet ministers and their close family members
- all departments and public sector entities that are controlled and consolidated into the whole of state consolidated financial statements.

All related party transactions have been entered into on an arm's length basis.

Significant transactions with government-related entities

Controlled

The VEC received funding of \$74.9 million (2020: \$37.5 million).

Administered

The VEC received funding and made payments to the Consolidated Fund of \$11.9 million (2020: \$12.1 million) and \$21.2 million (2020: \$3.9 million) respectively.

Remuneration of key management personnel (KMP):

Mr Warwick Gately AM, Electoral Commissioner
Ms Elizabeth Williams, Deputy Electoral Commissioner

The compensation below excludes the salaries and benefits the Portfolio Minister receives. The Minister's remuneration and allowances is set by the *Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968* and is reported within the Department of Parliamentary Services' Financial Report.

Compensation of KMPs

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Short-term benefits	555	577
Post-employment benefits	53	55
Other long-term benefits	9	14
Termination benefits	-	-
Total compensation	617	646

Transactions and balances with key management personnel and other related parties

The VEC has prepared the related party disclosures for the year based on reasonable enquiries made by management in relation to the portfolio ministers and their related parties and the information available to the organisation.

There were no related party transactions that involved key management personnel, their close family members and their personal business interests. No provision has been required, nor any expense recognised, for impairment of receivables from related parties.

9.6 Remuneration of auditors

VICTORIAN AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Audit of the financial statements	25	25
	25	25

9.7 Subsequent events

The Victorian Electoral Commission has no material or significant events occurring after the reporting date.

9.8 Other accounting policies

Contributions by owners

Consistent with the requirements of AASB 1004 Contributions, contributions by owners (that is, contributed capital and its repayment) are treated as equity transactions and, therefore, do not form part of the income and expenses of the VEC.

Additions to net assets that have been designated as contributions are recognised as contributed capital. Other transfers that are in the nature of contributions to or distributions by owners have also been designated as contributions by owners.

9.9 Australian Accounting Standards issued that are not yet effective

Certain new AASs have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2021 reporting period. DTF assesses the impact of these new standards and advises the VEC of their applicability and early adoption where applicable.

As at 30 June 2021, the following AAS was issued by the AASB but not yet effective. It will become effective for the first financial statements for reporting periods commencing after the stated operative dates as follows.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

STANDARD/ INTERPRETATION	SUMMARY	APPLICABLE FOR ANNUAL REPORTING PERIODS BEGINNING ON	IMPACT ON VEC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AASB 2020-1 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-Current.	This Standard amends AASB 101 to clarify requirements for the presentation of liabilities in the statement of financial position as current or non-current. It initially applied to annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2022 with earlier adoption permitted, however the AASB has recently issued AASB2020-1 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current - Deferral of Effective Date with the intention to defer the application by one year to periods beginning on or after 1 January 2023. The Commission will not early adopt the Standard.	1 January 2023	The VEC is in the process of analysing the impacts of this Standard. However, it is not anticipated to have a material impact.

Several other amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to future reporting periods, but are considered to have limited impact on the VEC's reporting.

9.10 Glossary of technical terms and style conventions

Glossary

Amortisation

Amortisation is the expense which results from the consumption, extraction or use over time of a non-produced physical or intangible asset. This expense is classified as an other economic flow.

Borrowings

Borrowings refers to leases.

Comprehensive result

The net result of all items of income and expense recognised for the period. It is the aggregate of operating result and other comprehensive income.

Capital asset charge

The capital asset charge represents the opportunity cost of capital invested in the non-financial physical assets used in the provision of outputs.

Commitments

Commitments include those operating, capital and other outsourcing commitments arising from non-cancellable contractual or statutory sources.

Depreciation

Depreciation is an expense that arises from the consumption through wear or time of a produced physical or intangible asset. This expense is classified as a 'transaction' and so reduces the 'net result from transaction'.

Employee benefits expenses

Employee benefits expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, redundancy payments, defined benefit superannuation plans and defined contribution superannuation plans.

Ex-gratia payments

Ex-gratia expenses mean the voluntary payment of money or other non-monetary benefit (e.g. a write off) that is not made either to acquire goods, services or other benefits for the entity or to meet a legal liability, or to settle or resolve a possible legal liability or claim against the entity.

Financial asset

A financial asset is any asset that is:

- a. cash
- b. an equity instrument of another entity
- c. a contractual or statutory right:
 - to exchange financial assets or financial liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially favourable to the entity
- d. a contract that will or may be settled in the entity's own equity instruments and is:
 - a non-derivative for which the entity is or may be obliged to receive a variable number of the entity's own equity instruments; or
 - a derivative that will or may be settled other than by the exchange of a fixed amount of cash or another financial asset for a fixed number of the entity's own equity instruments.

Financial instrument

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial assets or liabilities that are non contractual (such as statutory receivables or payables that arise as a result of statutory requirements imposed by governments) are not financial instruments.

Financial liability

A financial liability is any liability that is:

- a. a contractual obligation:
 - (i) To deliver cash or another financial asset to another entity; or
 - (ii) To exchange financial assets or financial liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially unfavourable to the entity; or
- b. A contract that will or may be settled in the entity's own equity instruments and is:
 - (i) A non-derivative for which the entity is or may be obliged to deliver a variable number of the entity's own equity instruments; or

- (ii) A derivative that will or may be settled other than by the exchange of a fixed amount of cash or another financial asset for a fixed number of the entity's own equity instruments. For this purpose the entity's own equity instruments do not include instruments that are themselves contracts for the future receipt or delivery of the entity's own equity instruments.

Financial statements

A complete set of financial statements comprises:

- a. balance sheet as at the end of the period;
- b. a comprehensive operating statement for the period;
- c. a statement of changes in equity for the period;
- d. a cash flow statement for the period;
- e. notes, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information;
- f. comparative information in respect of the preceding period as specified in paragraphs 38 of AASB 101 *Presentation of Financial Statements*; and
- g. a statement of financial position as at the beginning of the preceding period when an entity applies an accounting policy retrospectively or makes a retrospective restatement of items in its financial statements, or when it reclassifies items in its financial statements in accordance with paragraphs 41 of AASB 101.

General government sector

The general government sector comprises all government departments, offices and other bodies engaged in providing services free of charge or at prices significantly below their cost of production. General government services include those which are mainly non-market in nature those which are largely for collective consumption by the community and those which involve the transfer or redistribution of income. These services are financed mainly through taxes, or other compulsory levies and user charges.

Intangible produced assets

Refer to produced assets in this glossary.

Interest expense

Costs incurred in connection with the borrowing of funds includes the interest component, of finance lease repayments.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONT)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2021

Net result

Net result is a measure of financial performance of the operations for the period. It is the net result of items of income, gains and expenses (including losses) recognised for the period, excluding those that are classified as 'other economic flows - other comprehensive income'.

Net worth

Assets less liabilities, which is an economic measure of wealth.

Other economic flows included in net result

Other economic flows included in net result are changes in the volume or value of an asset or liability that do not result from transactions. It includes gains and losses from disposals, revaluations and impairments of non-financial physical and intangible assets and fair value changes of financial instruments.

Other economic flows - other comprehensive income

Other economic flows - other comprehensive income comprises items (including reclassification adjustments) that are not recognised in net result as required or permitted by other Australian Accounting Standards.

Payables

Includes short and long term trade debt and accounts payable, grants, taxes and interest payable.

Produced assets

Produced assets include plant and equipment, inventories and certain intangible assets. Intangible produced assets include computer software.

Receivables

Includes amounts owing from government through appropriation receivable, short and long term trade credit and accounts receivable.

Sales of goods and services

Refers to income from the direct provision of goods and services and includes fees and charges for services rendered, sales of goods and services, fees from regulatory services and work done as an agent for private enterprises. It also includes rental income under operating leases and on produced assets such as buildings and entertainment, but excludes rent income from the use of non-produced assets such as land. User charges includes sale of goods and services income.

Supplies and services

Supplies and services generally represent cost of goods sold and the day-to-day running costs, including maintenance costs, incurred in the normal operations of the Commission.

Transactions

Transactions are those economic flows that are considered to arise as a result of policy decisions, usually an interaction between two entities by mutual agreement. They also include flows within an entity such as depreciation where the owner is simultaneously acting as the owner of the depreciating asset and as the consumer of the service provided by the asset. Taxation is regarded as mutually agreed interactions between the government and taxpayers. Transactions can be in kind (e.g. assets provided/given free of charge or for nominal consideration) or where the final consideration is cash. In simple terms, transactions arise from the policy decisions of the government.

Style conventions

Figures in the tables and in the text have been rounded. Discrepancies in tables between totals and sums of components reflect rounding. Percentage variations in all tables are based on the underlying unrounded amounts.

The notation used in the tables is as follows:

- zero, or rounded to zero

{xxx.x} negative numbers

20xx year period

20xx-xx year period

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT



Independent Auditor's Report

To the Commissioner of the Victorian Electoral Commission

Opinion	<p>I have audited the financial report of the Victorian Electoral Commission (the Commission) which comprises the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balance sheet as at 30 June 2021 • comprehensive operating statement for the year then ended • statement of changes in equity for the year then ended • cash flow statement for the year then ended • notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies • declaration in the financial statements. <p>In my opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Commission as at 30 June 2021 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i> and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.</p>
Basis for opinion	<p>I have conducted my audit in accordance with the <i>Audit Act 1994</i> which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the <i>Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report</i> section of my report.</p> <p>My independence is established by the <i>Constitution Act 1975</i>. My staff and I are independent of the Commission in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's <i>APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants</i> (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.</p> <p>I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.</p>
Commissioner's responsibilities for the financial report	<p>The Commissioner is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>, and for such internal control as the Commissioner determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.</p> <p>In preparing the financial report, the Commissioner is responsible for assessing the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.</p>

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT (CONT)

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Commission's internal control.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Commissioner.
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Commissioner's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Commission to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Commissioner regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

MELBOURNE
16 August 2021



Timothy Maxfield
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

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LEGISLATION
AND REGULATIONS****LEGISLATION**

- *Agricultural Industry Development Act 1990*
- *Building Act 1993*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
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- *City of Melbourne Act 2001*
- *Constitution Act 1975*
- *Electoral Act 2002*
- *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Essential Services Act 1958*
- *Financial Management Act 1994*
- *Fines Reform Act 2014*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Infringements Act 2006*
- *Juries Act 2000*
- *Legal Profession Act 2004*
- *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Local Jobs Act 2003*
- *Monetary Units Act 2004*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*
- *Public Records Act 1973*
- *Shop Trading Reform Act 1996*
- *Vital State Projects Act 1976*

REGULATIONS

- Agricultural Industry Development (Polls) Regulations 2011
- City of Melbourne (Electoral) Regulations 2012
- Electoral Regulations 2012
- Fines Reform Regulations 2017
- Infringements (General) Regulations 2006
- Infringements (Reporting and Prescribed Details and Forms) Regulations 2006
- Legal Profession (Board Election) Regulations 2006
- Liquor Control Reform Regulations 2009
- Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2016 (to 7 July 2020)
- Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (from 7 July 2020)

APPENDIX C:**ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION
AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

On request, the following information sets are available from the VEC:

- details of publications produced by the VEC about itself, and where these can be obtained
- details of changes in prices, fees, charges, rates and levies charged by the VEC
- details of any major external reviews carried out in respect of the operation of the VEC
- details of major research and development activities undertaken by the VEC that are not otherwise covered in this report
- details of overseas visits undertaken, including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit
- details of assessments and measures undertaken to improve the occupational health and safety of employees, not otherwise detailed in this report
- a general statement on industrial relations within the VEC and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes.

APPENDIX D:**REPORTING
PROCEDURES UNDER
THE *PUBLIC INTEREST
DISCLOSURES ACT 2012*¹**

Disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the Electoral Commissioner or another officer of the VEC must be made to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission
GPO Box 24234
Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone 1300 735 135

FURTHER INFORMATION

Written guidelines outlining the system for reporting disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the VEC or its employees, and the disclosure handling procedures, are available from the VEC.

¹ Formerly known as the *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*

APPENDIX E:**MAKING A REQUEST
UNDER THE *FREEDOM
OF INFORMATION ACT
1982***

As detailed in section 17 of the FOI Act, access to documents may be obtained through written request to the Freedom of Information Officer.

In summary, requests should:

- be in writing
 - identify as clearly as possible which document is being requested
- and
- be accompanied by the appropriate application fee (the fee may be waived in certain circumstances).

Requests for documents in the possession of the VEC should be lodged by email to foi@vec.vic.gov.au or by mail addressed to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Access charges may also apply once documents have been processed and a decision on access is made; for example, photocopying and search and retrieval charges.

The VEC may arrange with the applicant to provide information or documents outside of the FOI Act. This avoids the need for processing a formal FOI request.

Information that may be released outside of the FOI Act includes:

- information relating only to the applicant
- information that may have been previously released to another applicant
- publicly available information.

Further information regarding Freedom of Information can be found at the Victorian Government Freedom of Information website (ovic.vic.gov.au).

APPENDIX F:

ATTESTATION FOR COMPLIANCE

Our Ref: EDRM046-92788806-274

Victorian Electoral Commission**Financial Management Compliance Attestation Statement**

The Victorian Electoral Commission has not identified any Material Compliance Deficiency in relation to 2020-21.

I, Warwick Gately, Electoral Commissioner, certify that the Victorian Electoral Commission has complied with the applicable Standing Directions of the Minister of Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and Instructions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Warwick Gately'. The signature is stylized and written over the printed name and title below it.

Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

Date: 12/8/2021

APPENDIX G:

ASSET MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY (AMAF) MATURITY ASSESSMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

The following summarises the VEC’s assessment of maturity against the requirements of the Asset Management Accountability Framework (AMAF). The VEC’s target maturity rating is ‘competence’, meaning systems and processes are fully in place, consistently applied and systematically meeting the AMAF requirement, including a continuous improvement process to expand system performance above AMAF minimum requirements.

Leadership and Accountability (requirements 1-19)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Planning (requirements 20-23)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Acquisition (requirements 24 and 25)

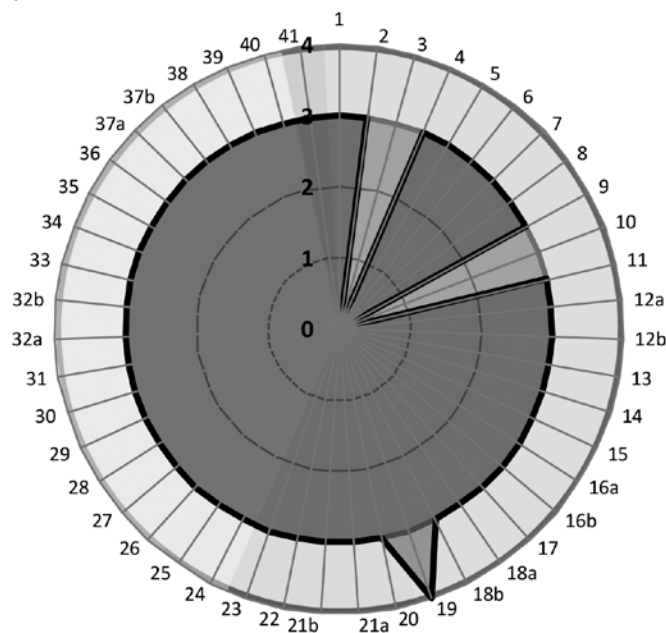
The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Operation (requirements 26-40)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.

Disposal (requirement 41)

The VEC has met its target maturity level within this category.



Legend

Status	Scale	Compliance
Not Applicable	N/A	Not Applicable
Innocence	0	Non-Comply
Awareness	1	Non-Comply
Developing	2	Non-Comply
Competence	3	Comply
Optimising	4	Comply
Unassessed	U/A	Unassessed



APPENDIX H:

SOCIAL PROCUREMENT

The VEC successfully implemented its social procurement strategy in 2019-20 in line with the Victorian social procurement framework and the VEC core legislative purpose. The following table provides an overview of the objectives and achievements reportable in 2020-21, which include deliverables and commitments related to the LG2020 elections. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, a range of planned activities were not able to proceed e.g. procuring artists and performers for NAIDOC, National Reconciliation Week and for the launch of the VEC's Aboriginal Advisory Group.

SOCIAL PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORK (SPF) OBJECTIVES	PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020-21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procured range of services and artworks from indigenous businesses and suppliers in support of Acknowledgment of Country poster, various designs and concepts. • Supply of services and engagement initiatives with indigenous groups such as Korin Gamadji Institute, Reconciliation Victoria, and YMCA Vic Youth (Aboriginal team) to help promote electoral engagement across the Victorian community. <p>Number of business and suppliers engaged: 5</p> <p>Total spend: \$163,181</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for Victorians with disability. • Opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians. • Supporting safe and fair workplaces. • Women's equality and safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procured range of services, artworks and products from business supporting disadvantaged Victorians. Acquisition include artwork for the VEC Multicultural Inclusion Plan and merchandise such as facemasks and socks produced by a social enterprise supporting young people with experiences of homelessness. • Employment opportunities for casual Democracy Ambassadors with disabilities to provide electoral education to the community in support of LG2020, the VEC's BeHeard Democracy Ambassador program. • Supply of services and engagement initiatives with a range of key stakeholders such as YMCA Vic Youth, Electoral Access Advisory Group, Homelessness Advisory Group, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community, and Victorian SRC to help promote electoral engagement across the Victorian community. <p>Number of business and suppliers engaged: 6</p> <p>Total spend: \$147,468</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentally sustainable outputs. • Environmentally sustainable business practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, the VEC will continue to leverage from whole-of-government contracts and services that target sustainable and environmental benefits. • The VEC also has the 'Resource Smart' in-house team, which drives environmentally sustainable practice within the organisation. Due to the constraints of COVID, various initiatives forming part of the VEC Sustainability Action Plan could not be delivered. The Resource Smart team will continue to drive the agenda in 2021-22.

APPENDIX I:**REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION, 2020–21**

The Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) is constituted under the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982* and must establish and maintain electorates of approximately equal enrolment (that is, not varying by more than 10% from the average for each House of Parliament) for the conduct of Parliamentary elections.

The members of the EBC during 2020–21 were:

- the Honourable Justice Peter Kidd, Chief Judge of the County Court of Victoria (Chairman)
- Mr Warwick Gately AM, Electoral Commissioner
- Mr Craig Sandy, Surveyor-General for Victoria.

The VEC provides administrative and technical support to the EBC and Dr Paul Thornton-Smith of the VEC is the secretary.

The Act provides that the EBC must conduct a redivision if certain conditions apply in the period 24 to 18 months before the next scheduled State election. These conditions are that enrolments for a certain number of electorates have been more than 10% outside the State average for at least two months, that there have been more than two general elections since the previous redivision, or that the number of electorates has changed. On 26 November 2020 the ‘general election’ trigger took effect, as there had been two general elections (in 2014 and 2018) since the last redivision. As well, enrolments for 28 of the 88 electoral districts were more than 10% outside the average, and seven districts were more than 20% outside the average.

During an online information session on 16 December 2020, the EBC set out the procedures for the redivision, described the resources available for those who wished to make a submission, and heard from expert demographers and from Geographic Names Victoria. The EBC invited submissions from the public and received 58 submissions by the deadline of 1 March 2021. An online public hearing held on 29–30 March 2021 was another opportunity for public input.

On 30 June 2021, the EBC released proposed electoral boundaries. The EBC invited public feedback on those boundaries. Written suggestions or objections about the proposed boundaries will be received until 30 July 2021. The EBC expects that boundaries will be finalised in October 2021.



**Electoral Boundaries
Commission**

GLOSSARY

Attendance election

In an attendance election, voting is conducted at voting centres on election day, although voters may vote at early voting centres or by postal vote.

Ballot

A method of secret voting.

By-election

A by-election is an election in a single-member electorate to fill a casual vacancy caused by the departure of a sitting Member of Parliament or local government councillor before the term expires. A by-election may also be held in a multi-member electorate when no unsuccessful candidates remain for a countback.

Candidate

A candidate is an eligible elector who nominates for election.

Community of interest

The VEC defines a community of interest as a group of people who share a range of common concerns or aspirations. A community of interest may occur where people are linked with each other geographically (e.g. a town or valley) or economically, such as where people work in similar industries (e.g. tourism) or where people work in mutually dependent industries (e.g. fruit growers, transporters and canners).

A community of interest may also appear where people share a number of special needs because of similar circumstances (such as people who have recently immigrated to Australia and may have low English literacy or need assistance with housing or employment).

Compulsory enrolment

All Australian citizens 18 years and over are required by law to enrol.

Compulsory voting

All enrolled electors must vote at State elections. With some exceptions, enrolled voters must vote at local government elections.

Contested election

A contested election is an election where more candidates than the number of vacancies for the election have nominated by the close of nominations.

Continuous Roll Update (CRU)

The CRU process consists of a range of strategies to ensure that the electoral roll is continuously kept up to date by using internal and external data to direct roll review activities to targeted people and residences.

Councillor

An elected representative of a local government council.

Countback

Method of filling extraordinary vacancies in multi-member wards and unsubdivided municipalities in electorates where general election results were obtained using the proportional representation method. Votes are transferred to the previously unelected candidates to fill the vacancy.

District

One of the 88 Legislative Assembly electorates in Victoria. Each District elects one member and comprises approximately 48,950 electors.

Election

An event at which electors choose their representatives.

Election date

The legislated date of the election.

Election Manager

A person appointed by the Electoral Commissioner to conduct an election for a State electoral District or Region or a local government election.

Electors

A person whose name appears on the register of electors and who is entitled to vote in elections.

Electoral Commissioner

The statutory officer appointed by the Governor in Council with responsibility for the proper conduct of Parliamentary and statutory elections.

Electoral Matters Committee (EMC)

The EMC comprises ten Members of Parliament drawn from both Houses and is a Joint Investigatory Committee of the Parliament of Victoria. The EMC is constituted under section 9A of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*. It inquires into, considers and reports to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with the conduct of Parliamentary elections and referendums in Victoria, the conduct of elections of councillors under the LGA 2020 and the administration of, or practices associated with, the Electoral Act and any other law relating to electoral matters.

Electoral roll

A list of names of all the people who are entitled to vote in an election under relevant legislation.

Electronically assisted voting

A method of casting a vote in State elections by electors who are blind, have low vision or have a motor impairment.

Enrolment

The placement of a person's name and address on the register of electors. A person cannot vote in an election unless they are enrolled.

Enrolment information

The information about electors that is held by the VEC.

Geo-coding

Geo-coding is the process of assigning geographic identifiers (e.g., codes or geographic coordinates expressed as latitude-longitude) to map features and other data records, such as street addresses.

Informal vote

A ballot paper that is either left blank or is incorrectly marked. These ballot papers do not contribute to the election of a candidate.

Legislative Assembly (Lower House)

One of the two Houses in the Victorian State Parliament. There are 88 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), one from each electoral district. The party or coalition of parties that win majority support in this House forms the Government.

Legislative Council (Upper House)

One of the two Houses in the Victorian State Parliament. There are 40 Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs), five from each region. The Legislative Council is often referred to as the 'House of Review'.

GLOSSARY (CONT)

Lost Time Injury (LTI)

An LTI is an occupational injury or illness that results in days away from work on any rostered shift subsequent to that on which the injury occurred. A fatality is also recorded as an LTI.

Marginal costs

Marginal costs include direct labour and associated on-costs, materials, equipment, mail processing, postage, advertising, printing, rent, utilities, insurance, IT equipment and software licences purchased especially for the specific activity.

Postal election

In a postal election, voting papers are posted to voters by the Election Manager. A vote is cast by completing a ballot paper and returning it to the Election Manager in the reply-paid envelope provided.

Preferential voting

A vote for candidates in order of preference. If no candidate has an absolute majority of first preference votes, preferences are distributed until one candidate has an absolute majority.

Proportional representation

A system of voting designed to elect representatives in proportion to the amount of support each has in the electorate.

Redivision

The redrawing of electoral boundaries to ensure that there are, as near as possible, equal numbers of voters in each electorate within Victoria.

Region

One of the eight Legislative Council electorates. Each region comprises approximately 538,000 electors and elects five Members.

Register of electors

The VEC's database of all Victorian electors.

Registered political party

A political party that is registered under the Electoral Act. A registered party must have at least 500 members who are Victorian electors and not members of another registered political party.

Senior Election Official (SEO)

A trained election official who may be appointed to act as an Election Manager for a Parliamentary election or an Election Manager or Assistant Election Manager for a local government election.

Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC)

The VEC is the independent statutory body that conducts State elections and certain statutory elections. The VEC also conducts local government elections, and commercial and community elections. The VEC also conducts electoral research, maintains the Victorian register of electors, provides education and information services, and assists with redivisions of State electoral boundaries. From 2018, the VEC has administered political funding and disclosure laws.

Voter

An elector who votes in an election.

Voting centre

A place at which electors can vote in an election. There are three types of voting centres that operate in State elections: early voting centres, mobile voting centres and election day voting centres.

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Feedback on this report is welcome.
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