



Victorian Electoral Commission

Report on the Northcote District By-election held on 18 November 2017

May 2018

The Honourable Bruce Atkinson, MLC,
President of the Legislative Council

The Honourable Colin Brooks, MP,
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

I am pleased to submit to you, for presentation to Parliament, this report on the conduct of the Northcote District by-election held on 18 November 2017.

The report is presented in accordance with section 8(2)(b) of the *Electoral Act 2002*.



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This publication is available online at vec.vic.gov.au

ABN 46 583 749 552
ISBN 978-0-9876072-4-9

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Executive summary

A by-election for the State District of Northcote was triggered, by the death on 23 August 2017, of the sitting member, the Honourable Fiona Richardson, MP.

Twelve candidates nominated for the by-election. Eight independent candidates nominated and the Australian Greens, Liberal Democratic Party, Australian Labor Party and Animal Justice Party each endorsed a candidate. The Liberal Party did not nominate a candidate for this by-election. As no candidate achieved an absolute majority, a preference distribution was required. Ms Lidia Thorpe, the candidate for the Australian Greens, who polled 45.22% of the first-preference votes, was elected at the ninth exclusion.

A communication campaign that included householder letters on enrolment and voting, and a range of newspaper advertisements helped ensure that electors were aware of details of the by-election, their voting options and the result.

The turnout rate of 79.04% was lower than the turnout rate of 91.67% for Northcote District in the 2014 State election and the average turnout of 82.60% for the five preceding State by-elections.

In line with observed trends, the proportion of total votes cast prior to election day in person or by post, was 34.54%, an increase from 23.01% for Northcote District at the 2014 State election. This increase has been observed around Australia and is a subject of consideration by the VEC as planning for the 2018 State election is taking place.

The informality rate of 5.10%, with twelve candidates, was an increase on the informality rate of 4.22% for Northcote District with seven candidates at the 2014 State election. Yet the informality rate was lower than the average informality rate of 7.14% for the five preceding State by-elections.

The result of the by-election was declared on Friday 24 November 2017, and the writ was returned to the Speaker, the Hon. Colin Brooks MP, on Monday 27 November 2017.

I take this opportunity to thank all VEC staff, contractors and suppliers, and particularly the Election Manager, Ms Chris Browne, Assistant Election Managers, Mr Gordon McFarlane and Ms Norena Kavanagh and Election Support Officer, Ms Therese Camm, for their contributions to the very successful conduct of the Northcote District by-election.

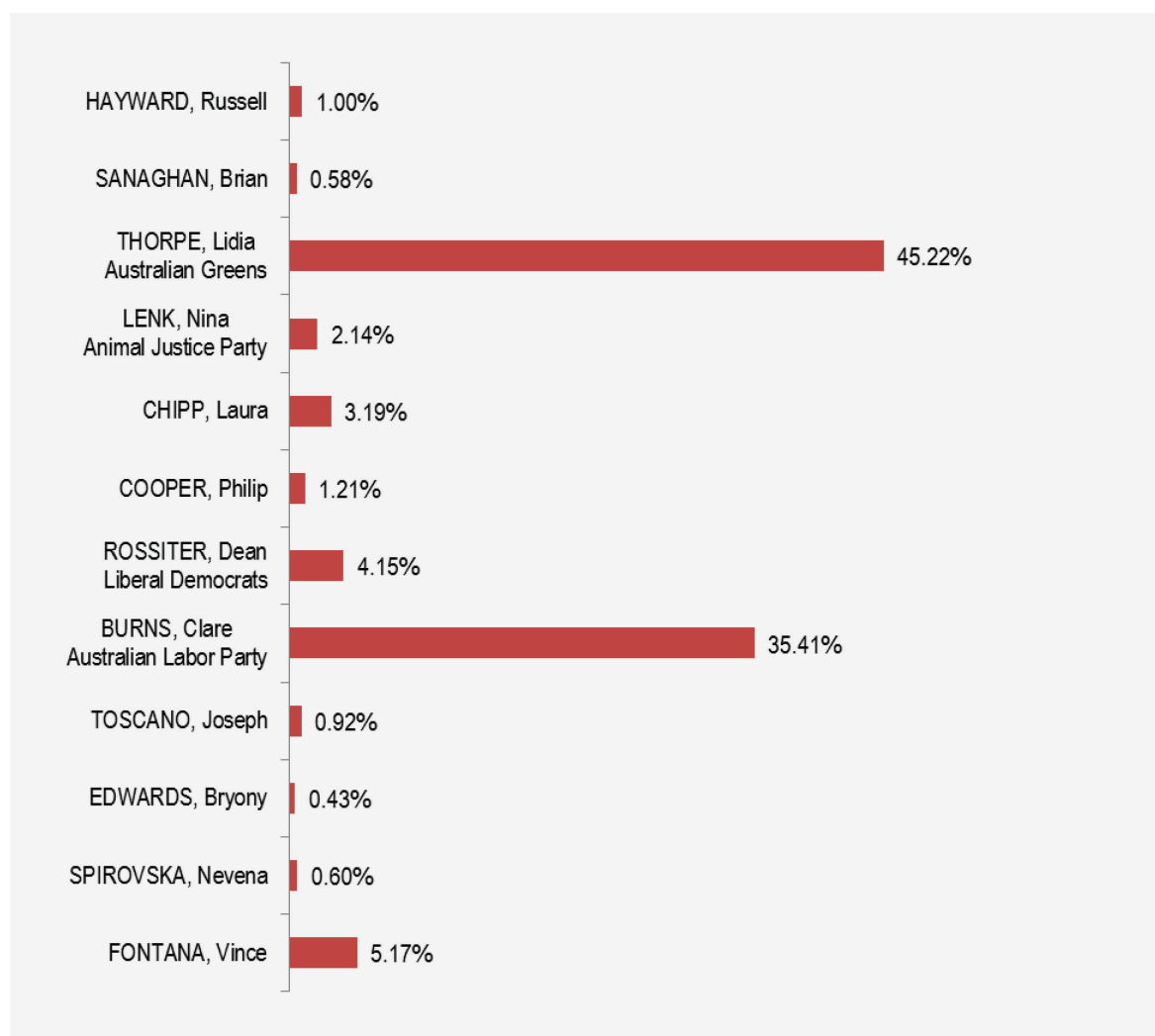


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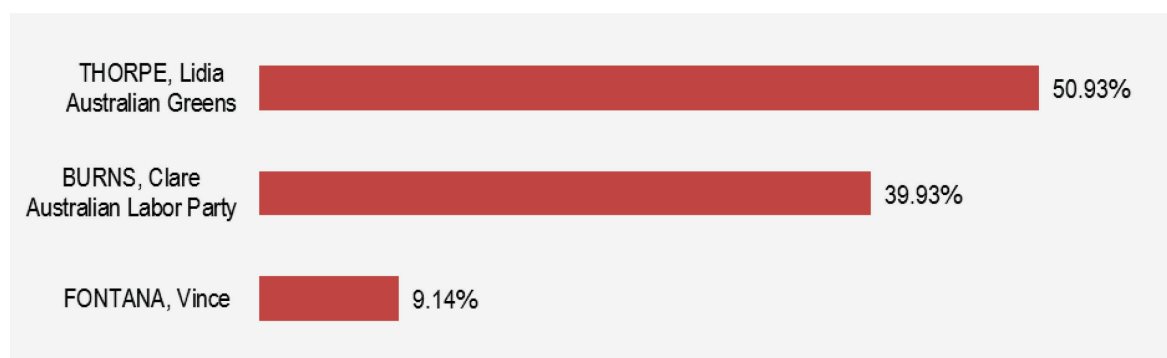
1. Snapshot

NORTHCOTE DISTRICT

First preference votes (% of first preference votes)

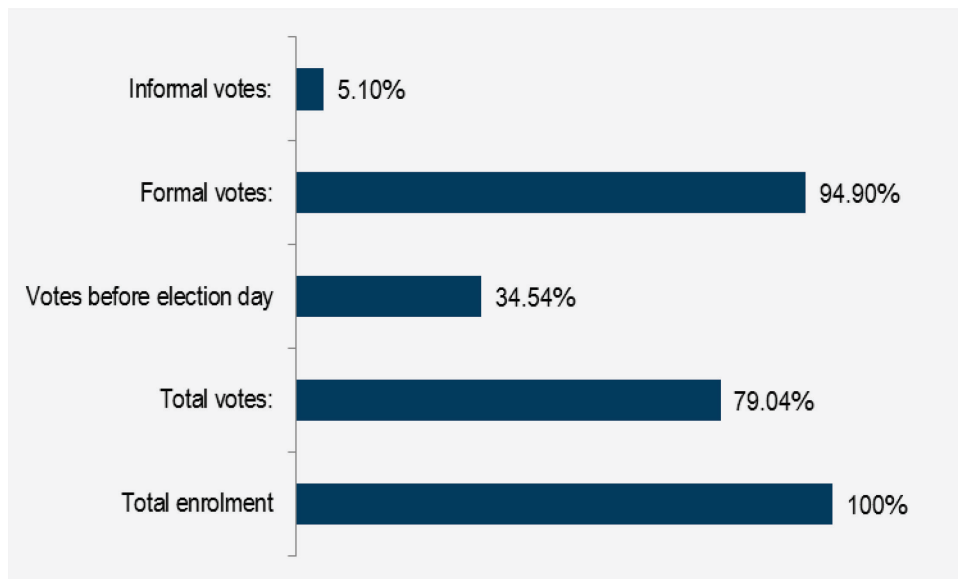


Results after distribution of preferences

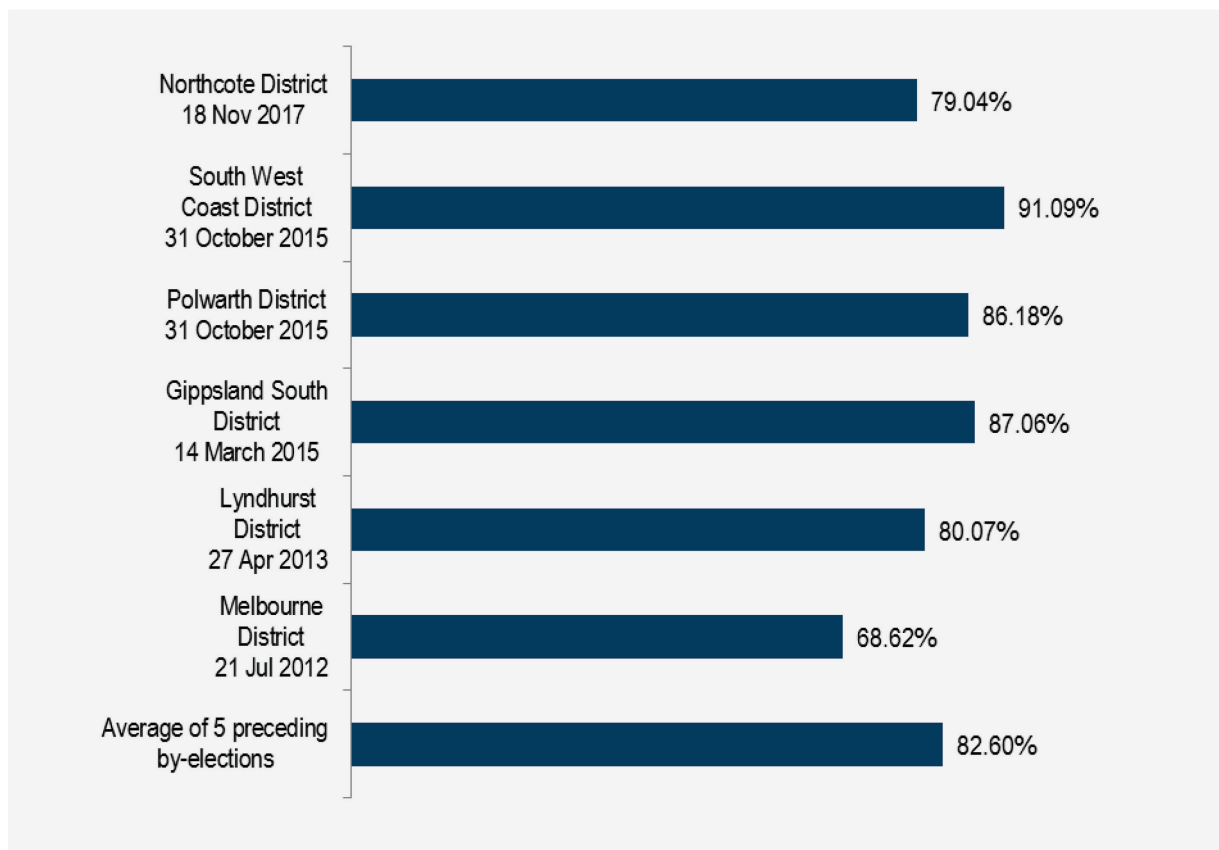


Footnote: Lidia Thorpe gained an absolute majority at the ninth exclusion.

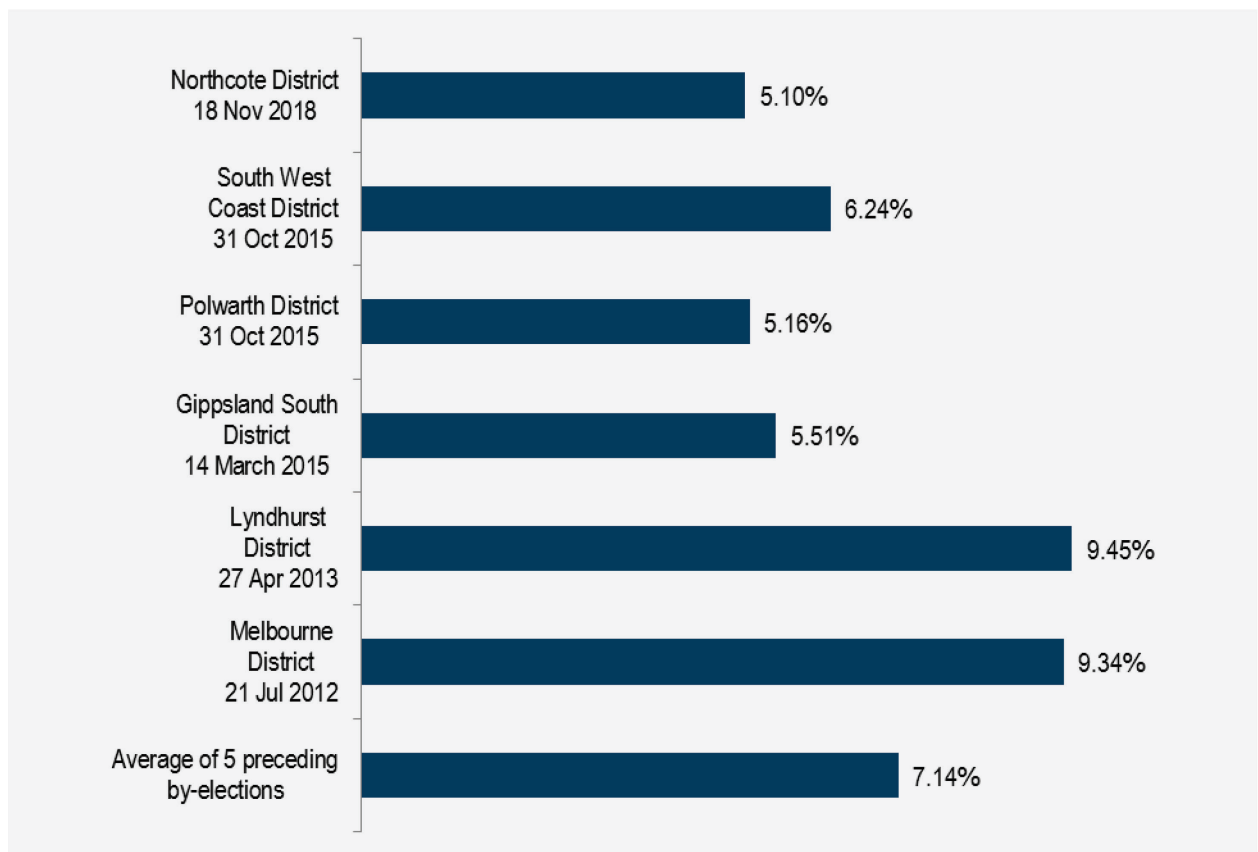
Participation at Northcote District by-election 2017



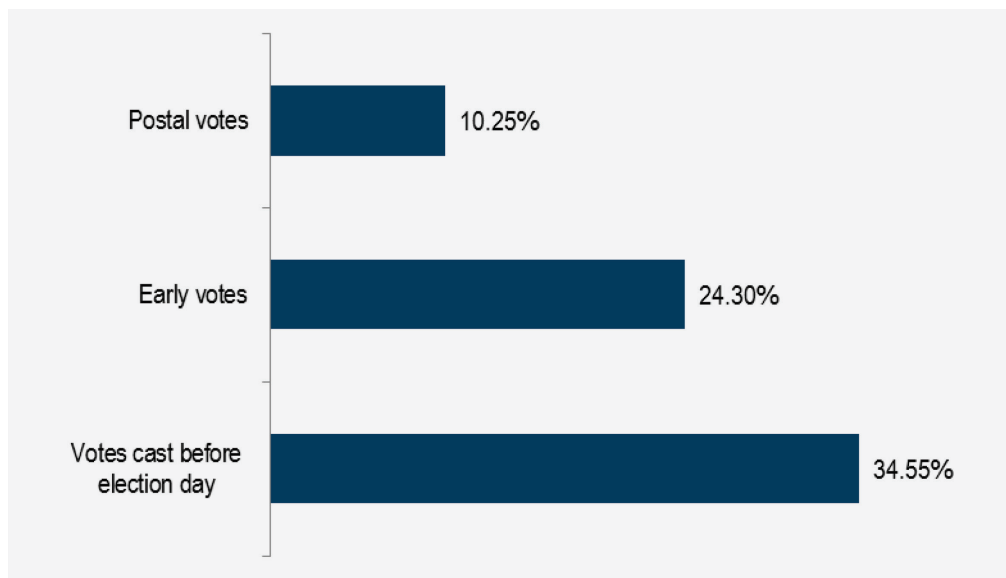
Voter turnout at previous Victorian State by-elections (% enrolment)



Informal votes at previous Victorian State by-elections (% votes)



Early votes



2. Background

The writ

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly issued a writ for the by-election for Northcote District on Thursday 21 September 2017. The writ set out the timeline for the by-election. Election day was set for Saturday 18 November, subsequently there was approximately four weeks for the nomination period followed by a four week early voting period – the longest possible by-election timeline.

Election timeline

Issue of the writ	Thursday 21 September
Nominations opened	9.00 am Friday 22 September
Close of Roll	8.00 pm Thursday 28 September
Close of Nominations (party candidates)	12 noon Wednesday 18 October
Close of Nominations (independent candidates)	12 noon Thursday 19 October
Early voting commenced	4.00 pm Thursday 19 October
Registration of how-to-vote-cards opens	Friday 20 October
Registration of how-to-vote cards closed	12 noon Friday 10 November
Last chance to apply for a postal vote	6.00 pm Thursday 16 November
Early voting closed	6.00 pm Friday 17 November
ELECTION DAY VOTING	8.00 am to 6.00 pm Saturday 18 November
Results	from 6.00 pm Saturday 18 November
Last day for return of writ	Friday 8 December

Preliminary arrangements with other agencies

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

The VEC made preliminary arrangements with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to ensure that any matters relating to how-to-vote cards

could be heard within a 24 hour period. The VEC thanks the VCAT for its support.

Victorian Government Solicitor's Office

The VEC made preliminary arrangements with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO) to have a senior legal advisor on standby 24 hours a day during the election period, to ensure that any matters were dealt with in a timely fashion. The VEC thanks the VGSO for its support.

Victoria Police

The VEC contacted the Chief Commissioner of Police to request a discrete police presence at all voting centres during the hours of voting on election day. The VEC provided a full list of all voting venues to Victoria Police to assist with this request. The VEC formally records its appreciation for the support received from the Chief Commissioner and Victoria Police.

Supreme Court

The VEC made preliminary arrangements with the Supreme Court of Victoria to ensure that a Practice Court and presiding judge would be available to hear any applications for injunctions if the need arose on election day. The VEC thanks the Supreme Court for its support.

The former member

The Honourable Fiona Richardson, MP represented the District of Northcote from 2006 to 2017. Ms Richardson was the Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence from 2014 to 2017 after serving as the Shadow Minister for Innovation, and Shadow Minister for Small Business from 2010 to 2014. In August 2017 Ms Richardson took medical leave from parliament and eventually announced that she would not contest the 2018 State election due to illness. Ms Richardson's death was announced on 23 August 2017 creating the vacancy within Northcote District.

Profile of the District

Northcote District is an inner metropolitan electorate located approximately five kilometres north-east of Melbourne. It includes the suburbs of Alphington,

Fairfield, Northcote, Thornbury and part of Preston. The District features residential areas, the John Cain Memorial Park, most of Yarra Bend Park, and the Northcote shopping complex.

Map of the District



Historical pattern of the District

1927-2017	ALP
2017-present	AUSTRALIAN GREENS

Past Results for Northcote District

2014 State election results

Elected member	RICHARDSON, Fiona
Total enrolment	44,273
Formal votes:	38,871
Informal votes:	1,713 (4.22%)
Total votes:	40,584 (91.67%)

Candidate	First preference votes	%
McCARNEY, Jamie	1,043	2.68%
RICHARDSON, Fiona	15,928	40.98%
FENN, Helen	390	1.00%
PURCELL, Georgina	678	1.74%
D'ANGELO, Anthony	6,407	16.48%
EDWARDS, Bryony	324	0.83%
McCARTHY, Trent	14,101	36.28%

2010 State election results

Elected member	RICHARDSON, Fiona
Total Enrolment:	40,423
Formal Votes:	35,422
Informal Votes:	1,567 (4.24%)
Total Votes:	36,989 (91.50%)

Candidate	1st pref votes	% of 1st pref votes
MARTINELLI, Anne	10,927	30.85%
BISHOP, Robert	1,098	3.10%
MARINO, Dominic	213	0.60%
RICHARDSON, Fiona	15,917	44.94%
MORAN, Steve	6,863	19.37%
LEWIN-HILL, Darren	404	1.14%

3. Participation

The VEC uses three measures to determine participation in the electoral system:

- enrolment: the proportion of the eligible voting population that enrolls to vote
- turnout: the degree to which those who are enrolled actually vote in elections
- informality: the degree to which those who vote cast an informal vote.

Enrolment

At the close of roll, there were 48,113 electors enrolled, 3,840 more than at the close of roll for the 2014 State election.

See Section 5 of this report for information about enrolment.

Turnout

The turnout for the Northcote District by-election was 79.04%, a decrease from the 2014 State election which realised a 91.67% turnout for Northcote District.

The turnout rate for the by-election was lower than the average turnout of 82.60% for the five preceding State by-elections.

Informal voting

The informality rate of 5.10% was an increase on the informality rate of 4.22% for Northcote District at the 2014 State election.

The informality rate for the Northcote District by-election was lower than the average informality rate of 7.14% for the five preceding State by-elections.

An analysis of informal voting at the Northcote District by-election is included in Appendix 4.

4. Election office and personnel

Election Office

An Election Office was established at the VEC's Warehouse at Factory 2, 130-138 Link Road, Melbourne Airport. The office was open Monday to Friday from Friday 22 September 2017 until Friday 17 November 2017.

Election Manager

Ms Chris Browne was appointed the Election Manager for the District. The Election Manager was responsible for:

- staffing the Election Office
- receiving candidate nominations
- conducting the draw for ballot paper positions
- dealing with electoral enquiries
- appointing voting centre managers and election officials
- training voting centre managers
- receiving how-to-vote cards for registration by the VEC
- supervising voting, and receiving and recording results
- declaring the election.

The Election Manager was assisted by two Assistant Election Managers, VEC staff and other election officials.

Support for Election Manager

Mr Gordon McFarlane and Ms Norena Kavanagh were appointed as Assistant Election Managers and Ms Therese Camm was appointed Election Support Officer.

The VEC supported the Election Manager through the provision of:

- advice on election management
- office equipment and furniture, computers, telephones, ballot boxes, voting screens and voting centre furniture
- help desk support and assistance for the VEC's election management system and with other technical issues
- electoral materials, including voting centre and office forms and manuals
- a voter information campaign for the by-election
- assistance with public and media relations
- netbooks for use in early and mobile voting centres.

Recruitment and training

A total of 152 staff were appointed across 178 roles for the by-election (some staff were appointed to multiple roles) including an Election Manager, two Assistant Election Managers and an Election Support Officer.

Of these, 116 were appointed as election officials at voting centres on Election Day. Two election officials were appointed as election liaison officers responsible for ensuring processes and procedures were being followed at election day voting centres.

The Election Manager appointed 56 election casuals to assist with early voting at the early voting centres, mobile voting, and administrative duties including counts conducted at the Election Office.

All employees were required to complete relevant online training modules before commencing work at the election. This ensures that each employee receives the most up to date training for each election. Of note, 98.79% of staff completed the assigned online training. Not completing the training impacted the employee's performance rating. The VEC also provided comprehensive support materials such as manuals and reference guides for staff to study and use on the job.

A face-to-face training session was conducted for voting centre managers, assistant voting centre managers, early voting centre managers, election liaison officers and mobile early voting centre team leaders.

The Election Manager and Assistant Election Managers had previous recent election experience but underwent a further briefing in the election office on the Northcote District by-election.

5. Services to electors

Enrolment

The day after the issue of the writ for Northcote District, the VEC sent written notification of the by-election to every household in the electorate. The letter advised that, since a by-election would be held soon, eligible people who were not on the electoral roll should enrol, and those who had recently moved should update their enrolment details. This provided four working days for electors to ensure that they were correctly enrolled and eligible to vote in the by-election.

Enrolment advertisements were also placed in the Age and the Herald Sun newspapers as well as local papers (see Appendix 3 for the advertising schedule and sample communication products).

Electors were able to update their enrolment, or enrol on the VEC website (vec.vic.gov.au). Printed enrolment forms were also available from the VEC website, Australia Post offices, Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) divisional offices and by contacting the VEC Election Office.

The VEC head office and Election Office remained open until 8.00 pm on Thursday, 28 September - the

close of roll. The VEC also made arrangements with the AEC for the Batman divisional office in Thornbury to remain open until 8.00 pm on Thursday, 28 September 2017.

A total of 427 enrolment transactions occurred between the issue of the writ and the close of roll.

Transaction Type		Number of transactions
New to Roll		44
Change of Address Transactions	Moved Into District	182
	Moved Out of District	111
	Moved Within District	77
	Total Change of Address Transactions	370
Reinstatement		13

At the close of roll, there were 48,113 electors enrolled, 3,840 more than at the close of roll for the 2014 State election. Of these electors, 960 were general postal voters (GPVs). GPVs automatically receive postal ballot material at the time of an election.

Services for electors from non-English speaking backgrounds

According to the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, English was stated as the only language spoken at home by 68.4% of people living in the Northcote District. Other languages spoken at home included Greek 7.4%, Italian 4.4%, Mandarin 1.5%, Arabic 1.4% and Vietnamese 1.1%.

Electors who were not fluent in English were able to telephone the VEC for information in other languages. Additionally, electors could access voting instructions translated into 21 languages (including English) printed inside each voting screen.

Accessibility of voting centres

All premises used as voting centres are rated for wheelchair accessibility using a rating assessment tool developed by the VEC. Ratings are included in

advertisements, the Election Guide and on the VEC website.

Of the three venues established as early voting centres (EVCs) two (Fairfield and the VEC's Melbourne office) were rated Assisted Wheelchair Access (AWA), mainly due to the distance between the disabled car park and the entrance to the early voting centre.

The Election Office EVC, established at the VEC's warehouse, was assessed as Independent Wheelchair Access (IWA).

Of the 14 election day voting centres, 11 were rated as Assisted Wheelchair Access (AWA) and the remaining 3 were rated as having Limited or No Wheelchair Accessibility (LNWA). To assist voters, a brief description of accessibility limitations was included on the VEC website for venues rated AWA or LNWA.

Voting before election day

Early voting

Electors unable to vote on election day had the opportunity to vote early at any of the early voting centres: Fairfield; the VEC office in Melbourne; or at the Election Office.

The addresses of the early voting centres were:

Fairfield – 116 Station Street

Melbourne Airport – Factory 2, 130-138 Link Road

VEC Melbourne – Level 11, 530 Collins Street.

Early voting centres were open between 8.30 am and 6.00 pm, Monday to Friday from Friday 20 October to Friday 17 November 2017. Extended opening hours were available on Saturday 11 November and Thursday 16 November.

A total of 9,239 Northcote District electors voted early in person for the by-election (24.30% of total votes), compared with 7,196 for the District at the 2014 State election (17.73% of total votes).

Mobile voting

A total of 62 electors took advantage of mobile voting, with mobile voting teams visiting 9 venues in the weeks prior to election day.

Voting interstate and overseas

Early voting services were provided at eight interstate locations and one overseas location (London).

A total of 48 early votes were cast outside Victoria for the Northcote District by-election. This compares with 176 for the District in the 2014 State election.

Postal voting

Electors unable to attend a voting centre on election day could apply for a postal vote from the Issue of the Writ. Postal vote applications were available for download at vec.vic.gov.au, and could be obtained at the Election Office or any post office in Northcote District, or by calling the VEC. Postal voting was also available at interstate early voting centres and in London.

The VEC commenced the dispatch of ballot material to postal voters once nominations closed and ballot papers were available. The initial lodgement of postal votes to electors included the 961 GPVs and applications received and processed up to the close of nominations. After this initial lodgement, postal vote applications were processed on the day they were received by the VEC. As postal vote applications may be received up until 6.00 pm on the Thursday prior to the election, the VEC contacted anyone whose application was received on that day to advise them that their vote had to be postmarked on or before election day to be included in the count, and to inform them of other available voting options. A total of 4,127 postal vote applications were processed for the Northcote District by-election.

Not all of the postal votes issued were returned by electors and a small number of postal votes returned were not included in the count due to not being signed by the elector and/or not being witnessed. A total of 3,897 postal votes were counted for the by-election (10.25% of total votes).

Four postal votes were returned from outside the State for the by-election. This compares with 35 at the 2014 State election.

Voting on election day

There were 14 voting centres established on election day in the Northcote District. All voting centres were provided with netbooks to allow for electronic mark-off of the roll therefore removing the requirement for paper based rolls. The provision of electronic roll marking meant election officials had a real time view of voting across each election day voting centre. This eliminated the possibility of a person voting more than once and the need to scan paper rolls after election day.

Provisional votes

People who were not on the roll, but who claimed to be entitled to enrol and vote, were able to cast a provisional vote. These people are required to show a proof of identification such as a driver licence or learner permit, or to nominate a service provider to be contacted for identity verification. Votes cast in this manner are classified as 'provisional' votes until the person's enrolment details can be verified.

A total of 153 provisional votes (49.20% of the 311 provisional votes received) were admitted to the count. Most of the excluded provisional votes were rejected because the voters were enrolled in districts other than Northcote.

6. Registered political parties and independent candidates

Registered political parties nominated their candidates directly with the VEC and independent candidates nominated at the Election Office.

Candidate nomination forms were available for download from the VEC's website or in hard copy upon request from the VEC head office or Election Office. The VEC provided independent candidates with the facility to complete a nomination form online

using a *Candidate Helper* prior to printing and submitting it to the election manager.

Twelve candidates nominated for the Northcote District by-election compared with seven candidates in the 2014 State election.

Information for parties and candidates

Registered political parties were invited to attend individual briefing sessions before the close of nominations. Prospective independent candidates were also invited to attend a briefing session conducted on 25 September 2017 at the Election Office. No prospective independent candidates attended.

A handbook explaining aspects of electoral law directly relating to candidates and scrutineers was available on the VEC website and in hardcopy at the VEC head office and at the Election Office. A Candidate Kit was also made available containing:

- a nomination form
- a how-to-vote card declaration
- an 'Appointment of Scrutineer' form
- an Electoral Roll Confidentiality Agreement
- a list of voting centres including early voting centres and interstate/overseas voting centres
- a map of the district
- Election Manager contact details.

Roll Data

After nominating, parties and candidates were provided access to a copy of the electoral roll for the District, via the VEC's secure data exchange server, for the purposes of campaigning – in compliance with section 33(6) of the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Registration of how-to-vote cards

How-to-vote cards that are distributed within 400 metres of a voting centre on election day must be registered with the VEC. Political parties were required to register how-to-vote cards directly with

the VEC. Independent candidates could submit their cards with the Election Manager for registration by the VEC.

A total of 13 how-to-vote cards were registered for the Northcote District by-election (see Figure 1). As required by legislation, registered how-to-vote cards were published on the VEC website.

Applicants	Number of HTVC's registered
SANAGHAN, Bernard	1
AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY - VICTORIAN BRANCH	1
CHIPP, Laura	2
ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY	1
FONTANA, Vincenzo	1
LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY	1
TOSCANO, Guiseppe	1
THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS - VICTORIA	1
SPIROVSKA, Nevena	1
EDWARDS, Bryony Jane	1
COOPER, Philip Brian	1
HAYWARD, Russell John	1

Figure 1: Applicants who registered a How-to-vote card, Northcote District by-election 2017

7. Communication services

The Northcote District by-election communication campaign consisted of direct mail, newspaper advertising, a local telephone enquiry service, proactive media relations, social media posts, and information and services provided via the VEC website.

Direct mail

The VEC distributed 30,567 enrolment information letters to households in Northcote District from Friday 22 September 2017.

An Election Guide was also sent to each household in the electorate. The guide provided information about early voting, postal voting, overseas and interstate voting and election day voting

arrangements. It also provided the location and accessibility rating of all voting centres.

A total of 25,482 Election Guides were lodged with Australia Post on Monday 9 October 2017 for distribution.

Newspaper advertising

A series of advertisements that met the requirements set out in the *Electoral Act 2002* appeared in local newspapers, as well as in The Age and Herald Sun throughout the election period.

See Appendix 3 for placement details and advertisement samples.

Telephone enquiry service

The election office operated a dedicated telephone enquiry service from Thursday 21 September. Calls to the office peaked when the enrolment and Election Guides were mailed out, with electors calling to:

- check enrolment details
- ask for advice about what to do if they could not attend a voting centre on election day and
- enquire about the location of election day voting centres.

Electors could also email the VEC with requests and queries via info@vec.vic.gov.au.

Website

From the day the writ was issued, the VEC website provided information about the by-election for electors in the District, candidates and the general public.

Electors were able to update their enrolment details online via the VEC's website. Online information detailed voting obligations and options for electors if they could not vote on election day. During the by-election period, around 600 postal vote applications were downloaded directly from the site, and a total of 2,481 sessions involved the download of the list of voting centre locations (including interstate and overseas). Candidate information and

nomination forms were also available on the website. Results were made available progressively on the VEC website after 6.00 pm on election night.

Traffic to the website peaked on election day, with 20,115 page views of the primary by-election information page and over 29,000 page views of the Northcote District by-election results page.

Social media

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were used by the VEC to help disseminate key election information and updates throughout the election.

The VEC used paid posts on Facebook and Instagram to distribute information on early voting, as the number of votes received in the early voting period was lower than predicted. The campaign generated a total of 11,120 impressions and reached 5,739 people. A total of 2,441 people took action on the post as a result of seeing the advert. The ad reached 8% more females than males and younger females aged 25-34 were the most engaged demographic. This suggests the early voting messaging was most relevant to this demographic, probably due to their working hours and busy lifestyles.

The majority of election related activity on social media took place on Twitter on election night. The most commonly used hashtags on Twitter were #NorthcoteVotes and #Northcotebyelection. Visits to the VEC's Facebook page were only marginally higher than when no election is being conducted.

Media relations

The VEC distributed five media releases to local and State-wide media outlets throughout the election period. The releases provided key electoral information, including the deadline for enrolment, the opening of candidate nominations, the final candidate list, the opening of the early voting period and voting options for Northcote District electors. A media advisory was also issued, offering interested media outlets the opportunity to record footage on election day.

The VEC handled a small volume of media enquiries relating to the Northcote District by-election from

local and State-wide media outlets. The majority of queries concerned the timing of the by-election, the timing of results, requests for filming on election day, and early voting figures.

On election night, results data files were made available to the media for download from the VEC website.

8. Counting the votes

After the 6.00 pm close of voting, first-preference counts took place in voting centres and the results were phoned through to the Election Office.

A two-candidate-preferred (2CP) count, to distribute preferences to the two candidates considered most likely to be in the lead after the distribution of preferences, was conducted following each count of first-preference votes. The VEC selected the Labor Party and the Australian Greens for the 2CP count.

Postal and early votes were counted in the Election Office on election night. Provisional votes were checked on the Monday after election day and those entitled to be admitted were counted.

A recheck was conducted on all ballot papers on the Monday following the election. A preference distribution was then completed to determine the result of the election. Ms Lidia Thorpe gained an absolute majority of votes after the exclusion of nine candidates. The VEC continued with the preference distribution for information purposes down to the final two candidates.

9. Declaration of result, return of the writ

Ms Lidia Thorpe (Greens) was declared elected on Friday 24 November 2017.

The writ was returned to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on Monday 27 November 2017.

10. Complaints

The VEC received 19 formal complaints about the Northcote District by-election. All of the complaints were in relation to either electoral material or the conduct of candidates and party workers. All complaints were managed in accordance with the VEC complaints process and where relevant, appropriate action was taken.

11. Actual cost

The actual direct costs incurred by the VEC in conducting the Northcote District by-election were \$548,473. This includes direct expenses and obligations related to salaries of temporary election personnel, advertising and associated infrastructure including office accommodation, transport and office requisites. These costs exclude the election entitlement payments shown in Figure 2.

12. Refund of nomination deposits

Candidates (or their party) must provide a deposit of \$350 at the time of nomination. This deposit is refunded if the candidate obtains at least 4% of the first preference vote or is elected. Deposits were refunded on 18 December 2017.

Of the 12 candidates, four were refunded their deposit, and eight candidates forfeited their deposit with the funds being forwarded to consolidated revenue.

13. Electoral entitlements

An amount of \$1.730 per vote was payable to political parties and independent candidates for this election where candidates obtained at least 4% of the first-preference votes.

Four candidates were eligible to receive an entitlement payment. All entitlements were paid by early March 2018.

Candidate	Entitlement amount
Burns, Clare Australian Labor Party - Victoria	\$22,106.64
Rossiter, Dean Liberal Democratic Party	\$2,589.69
Thorpe, Lidia The Australian Greens - Victoria	\$28,230.56
Fontana, Vince Independent	\$3,224.57

Figure 2: Electoral entitlements, Northcote District by-election

14. Enforcement of compulsory voting

Postal vote declarations received too late for the count, and elector information reports completed during early voting and at voting centres on election day — detailing elector excuses for not voting — were processed through the compulsory voting module of the VEC's Election Management System during December 2017.

The first stage of the non-voter follow-up process is conducted under Part 9, Division 2 of the *Electoral Act 2002*. Subsequent follow-up of electors who do not respond to the 'Apparent Failure to Vote' notice, or who provide an invalid response, is conducted under the *Infringements Act 2006*.

The first stage of compulsory voting follow-up for the Northcote District by-election commenced on 19 January 2018, with 7,867 Apparent Failure to Vote notices mailed.

On 7 March 2018, Infringement notices were mailed to 5,700 apparent non-voters who either did not respond to the Apparent Failure to Vote notice (4,711), or provided an invalid excuse (989) to the notice. The infringement notice included a penalty of \$79. At the close of the infringement notice stage a penalty reminder notice that includes costs as well as the original penalty will be sent to those non-voters with outstanding infringements.

Payment of penalties may be by cheque, money order, cash, via the internet using BPAY, or at any Australia Post outlet using the PostBillPay facility.

Penalties collected are progressively reconciled and transferred to consolidated revenue.

It is anticipated that enforcement of compulsory voting provisions will be completed by early July 2018. Further details regarding the enforcement of compulsory voting provisions at the by-election will be included in the VEC's Annual Report.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1: Detailed voting statistics

Enrolment:	48,113	
Formal votes:	36,088	
Informal votes:	1,940	(5.10% of total votes)
Total votes:	38,028	(79.04% of electors enrolled)

	HAYWARD, Russell	SANAGHAN, Brian	THORPE, Lidia AUSTRALIAN GREENS	LENK, Nina ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY	CHIPP, Laura	COOPE, Philip	ROSSITER, Dean LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	BURNS, Clare AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY	TOSCANO, Joseph	EDWARDS, Bryony	SPIROVSKA, Nevena	FONTANA, Vince	Informal Votes	Total Votes Polled
Alphington	5	11	466	26	56	11	34	406	4	2	5	43	58	1,127
Alphington North	15	5	345	26	47	15	43	331	9	3	5	49	73	966
Bell	14	26	1,118	39	58	28	78	651	10	16	9	109	116	2,272
Croxton	7	5	854	24	56	20	34	519	17	8	12	62	62	1,680
Darebin Parklands	7	3	129	13	11	5	18	166	5	0	2	25	39	423
Fairfield	20	9	807	27	68	22	68	557	6	17	13	53	89	1,756
Northcote	11	11	932	57	77	24	63	621	20	7	15	80	84	2,002
Northcote North	20	5	961	60	80	38	71	724	21	7	12	57	152	2,208
Northcote South	20	9	1,293	50	69	26	78	868	22	7	19	68	149	2,678
Preston South	19	5	527	30	38	15	53	529	19	1	7	73	88	1,404
Thornbury	10	3	987	46	57	46	46	669	21	5	17	115	140	2,162
Thornbury East	22	10	762	27	44	22	80	711	15	2	8	153	155	2,011
Thornbury South	14	5	1,059	51	62	43	93	860	10	9	13	143	114	2,476
Westgarth	10	4	903	30	29	14	34	399	16	9	11	46	59	1,564
Total Ordinary Votes	194	111	11,143	506	752	329	793	8,011	195	93	148	1076	1378	24,729

Early Vote	93	55	4,011	160	279	76	381	3,017	95	44	34	569	425	9,239
Marked as Voted	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	2	10
Postal Vote	67	42	1,100	104	118	28	319	1,693	39	17	32	212	126	3,897
Provisional	6	0	63	3	3	3	3	55	2	0	0	6	9	153
Total Declaration Votes	166	97	5,176	267	400	107	704	4,768	136	61	67	788	562	13,299
TOTAL ALL VOTE TYPES	360	208	16,319	773	1,152	436	1,497	12,779	331	154	215	1,864	1,940	38,028
Percentage of Formal Vote Polled By Candidate	1.00%	0.58%	45.22%	2.14%	3.19%	1.21%	4.15%	35.41%	0.92%	0.43%	0.60%	5.17%		

Appendix 2: Distribution of preference votes

Total Valid first preference votes polled for all candidates:	36,088
Number of votes required to constitute an absolute majority on first count:	18,045
Number of informal votes:	1,940

Candidates' Names (in ballot paper order)	HAYWARD, Russell	SANAGHAN, Brian	THORPE, Lidia	LENK, Nina	CHIPP, Laura	COOPER, Philip	ROSSITER, Dean	BURNS, Clare	TOSCANO, Joseph	EDWARDS, Bryony	SPIROVSKA, Nevena	FONTANA, Vince	TOTAL
Total first preference votes recorded for each candidate	360	208	16,319	773	1,152	436	1,497	12,779	331	154	215	1,864	36,088
Transfer of 154 ballot papers of EDWARDS, Bryony (1st excluded candidate)	16	3	58	13	11	6	2	8	17		12	8	154
Progressive Total	376	211	16,377	786	1,163	442	1,499	12,787	348		227	1,872	36,088
Transfer of 211 ballot papers of SANAGHAN, Brian (2nd excluded candidate)	39		67	12	20	9	14	9	11		5	25	211
Progressive Total	415		16,444	798	1,183	451	1,513	12,796	359		232	1,897	36,088
Transfer of 232 ballot papers of SPIROVSKA, Nevena (3rd excluded candidate)	21		72	13	22	7	9	36	15			37	232
Progressive Total	436		16,516	811	1,205	458	1,522	12,832	374			1,934	36,088
Transfer of 374 ballot papers of TOSCANO, Joseph (4th excluded candidate)	23		139	19	35	18	24	40				76	374
Progressive Total	459		16,655	830	1,240	476	1,546	12,872				2,010	36,088
Transfer of 459 ballot papers of HAYWARD, Russell (5th excluded candidate)			275	54	30	37	19	15				29	459
Progressive Total			16,930	884	1,270	513	1,565	12,887				2,039	36,088
Transfer of 513 ballot papers of COOPER, Philip (6th excluded candidate)			122	49	157		37	79				69	513
Progressive Total			17,052	933	1,427		1,602	12,966				2,108	36,088

Transfer of 933 ballot papers of LENK, Nina (7th excluded candidate)			351		148		79	282				73	933
Progressive Total			17,403		1,575		1,681	13,248				2,181	36,088
Transfer of 1575 ballot papers of CHIPP, Laura (8th excluded candidate)			533				201	647				194	1,575
Progressive Total			17,936				1,882	13,895				2,375	36,088
Transfer of 1882 ballot papers of ROSSITER, Dean (9th excluded candidate)			444					515				923	1,882
FINAL TOTAL			18,380					14,410				3,298	36,088

Thorpe, Lidia (The Australian Greens) elected at 9th exclusion

Appendix 3: Communication products

Appendix 3.1 - Advertisements

Advertisement	Outlets	Publication date(s)
Issue of the writ	The Age, Herald Sun, Northcote Leader, Preston Leader, Weekly Review - City	Saturday 23 September to Thursday 28 September 2017
Early voting	The Age, Herald Sun, Northcote Leader, Preston Leader, Weekly Review - City	Tuesday 24 October to Monday 6 November 2017
Vote today	The Age, Herald Sun	Saturday 18 November 2017

Appendix 3.2 - Issue of the Writ

Northcote District

State by-election

I have received a writ from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, The Honourable Colin Brooks, MP, issued on Thursday 21 September 2017, for the election of one member of the Legislative Assembly for Northcote District.

The writ specifies the following dates for the by-election:

Close of roll:
8.00 pm Thursday 28 September

Nominations close:
12 noon Thursday 19 October

Election day:
Saturday 18 November
(voting from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm)

Return of the writ:
On or before Friday 8 December

W. Gately, AM, Electoral Commissioner

Enrolling and Voting

Make sure you're enrolled to vote

You are already enrolled for the Northcote District by-election if you're on the State roll for your present address within the area shown on the map.

If you're an Australian citizen, aged 18 years or over and are not enrolled, you must enrol to vote immediately.

If you have recently moved or changed your name, you must update your enrolment by **8.00 pm on Thursday 28 September**.

How do I check if I'm on the roll?

You can check your enrolment details to see if they are current at enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au or by calling 1300 805 478.

Enrolling or updating your details online

To enrol or update your details online, just visit vec.vic.gov.au—there is no need for paper forms.

If you are enrolling for the first time, you will need a driver licence number, Australian passport number or a person who is already on the electoral roll in Victoria to confirm your identity.

For more information please visit vec.vic.gov.au or call 1300 805 478.

Enrolling or updating using a paper form

Paper enrolment forms are available at any post office or Australian Electoral Commission office.

Alternatively, visit vec.vic.gov.au to download a printable form.

Northcote District Map



Enrolling is compulsory

Enrolling and keeping your enrolment details up-to-date are compulsory.

However, if you have never enrolled or have let your details lapse, you will not be penalised if you enrol for this by-election.

When do I vote?

Election day is **Saturday 18 November**.

Details of where to vote and other voting options will be available shortly and mailed to households within Northcote District, listed online at vec.vic.gov.au and advertised in local newspapers.

Candidates

Nominations

Registered political parties must nominate candidates at the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne. Nominations close at 12 noon on Wednesday 18 October. Late nominations cannot be accepted.

Candidates not endorsed by a registered political party must nominate at the election office with the Election Manager, who will supply a Candidate Information Kit including a nomination form.

Non-party candidates can use the Candidate Helper at vec.vic.gov.au to pre-complete their nomination form.

Non-party candidate nominations close at 12 noon on Thursday 19 October.

Late nominations cannot be accepted.

An information session for prospective non-party candidates will be held at the election office. Call the Election Manager for more information.

Northcote District

Election Office: Factory 2,
130-138 Link Rd (Enter via Reid Way),
Melbourne Airport

Election Manager: Ms Chris Browne
Contact: (03) 8619 1561

How-to-vote cards

If a person or organisation intends to distribute how-to-vote cards on election day, Saturday 18 November, the cards must be registered by the VEC.

Registered how-to-vote cards are the only form of printed electoral material that may be distributed within 400 metres of a voting centre on election day.

The period for submitting how-to-vote cards for registration is from Friday 20 October to 12 noon Friday 10 November.

Organisations or individuals other than registered political parties can submit how-to-vote cards to the Election Manager for Northcote District or to the VEC.

Registered political parties must submit their how-to-vote cards for registration to the VEC at Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne.

How-to-vote cards submitted for registration after 12 noon on Friday 10 November cannot be accepted.

Voting is compulsory for all enrolled electors

[@electionsvec](https://twitter.com/electionsvec) [/electionsvec](https://facebook.com/electionsvec) 131 832 vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission **VEC**

Authorised by W Gately, AM, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.

Early voting

Northcote District by-election

Can't get to a voting centre on election day, Saturday 18 November?
Check your early voting options.

Vote in person
Vote between 8.30 am and 6.00 pm weekdays (excluding Melbourne Cup Day, 7 November) until Friday 17 November at:

- 116 Station Street, Fairfield AWA
- Factory 2, 130-138 Link Road (Enter Via Reid Way), Melbourne Airport IWA
- Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne AWA

IWA – Independent wheelchair access
AWA – Assisted wheelchair access
Extended early voting hours apply:

- 9.00 am – 2.00 pm Saturday 11 November
- 8.30 am – 8.00 pm Thursday 16 November

To vote early, you will have to declare that you are unable to attend a voting centre on election day during voting hours.

Vote by post
Download a postal vote application online at vec.vic.gov.au, or collect a postal vote application from any post office within Northcote District, or from the election office: Factory 2, 130-138 Link Road (Enter Via Reid Way), Melbourne Airport.
Complete and return your application immediately to have a ballot pack sent to you.

Going away?
Before you leave
Vote early in person or by post.


While you're away
Vote by post, or visit an interstate or overseas early voting centre during local business hours until Friday 17 November.
Check vec.vic.gov.au for locations.


Voting is compulsory for all enrolled electors


Who can vote in this by-election?
If you were on the State electoral roll for Northcote District as at the close of rolls, Thursday 28 September, you must vote.
Visit vec.vic.gov.au/Enrolment to check your enrolment.
You can also enrol and vote on the spot. Just bring one of these documents when you visit an early voting centre or a voting centre on election day:


- a driver licence or learner permit
- a current council rates notice in your name
- a current electricity bill in your name for your home address or
- a current Victorian identification, such as a Proof of Age card.

Correction: the notice published in this paper (24 October) incorrectly stated interstate and overseas early voting centres would be open until Friday 16 November.


 @electionsvic

 /electionsvic

 131 832

 vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission



Authorised by W Gateley, AM, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.

Vote today

Northcote District by-election

Who can vote?

Everyone on the State electoral roll for Northcote District can cast a vote at any voting centre on election day.

If you are an Australian citizen, aged 18 or over and living in Northcote District, who has never enrolled, you can enrol and vote on the spot. Just bring one of these documents when you visit a voting centre:

- a driver licence or learner permit
- a council rates notice in your name
- an electricity bill in your name for your current home address
- a current Victorian identification, such as a Proof of Age card.

How to vote correctly

For your vote to count, you must complete your ballot paper correctly.

Put the number **1** in the box next to the candidate you most want to see elected, then number **ALL** the other boxes in order of your preference.

You must number every box for your vote to count. Use numbers only.

Candidates

The candidates, in ballot paper order, are:

HAYWARD, Russell
 SANAGHAN, Brian
 THORPE, Lidia
 AUSTRALIAN GREENS
 LENK, Nina
 ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY
 CHIPP, Laura
 COOPER, Phillip
 ROSSITER, Dean
 LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
 BURNS, Clare
 AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
 TOSCANO, Joseph
 EDWARDS, Bryony
 SPIROVSKA, Nevena
 FONTANA, Vince

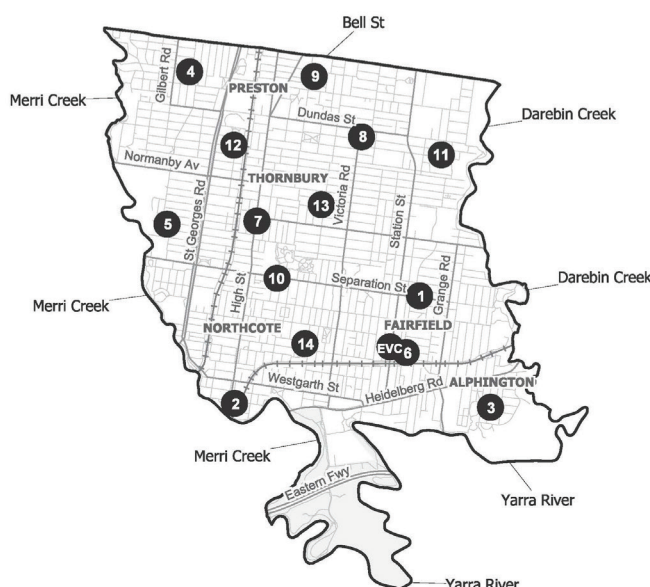
Voting is compulsory

Voting is compulsory if you were on the electoral roll for Northcote District at the close of the roll, 8.00 pm on Thursday 28 September 2017.

Visit vec.vic.gov.au to check your enrolment.

You may be fined if you do not vote.

Today is election day
Voting centres will be open 8.00 am to 6.00 pm



Voting centres

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Alfred Nuttall Kindergarten
34 Separation Street
Fairfield LNWA | 8. Penders Grove Primary School
370 Victoria Road
Thornbury AWA |
| 2. All Saints Parish Hall
corner High and Walker Streets
Northcote LNWA | 9. Preston South Primary School
56b Hotham Street
Preston AWA |
| 3. Alphington Primary School
Yarralea Street
Alphington LNWA | 10. Santa Maria College
50 Separation Street
Northcote AWA |
| 4. Bell Primary School
78a Oakover Road
Preston AWA | 11. Thornbury High School
238 Collins Street
Thornbury AWA |
| 5. Croxton School
159-165 Beaconsfield Parade
Northcote AWA | 12. Thornbury Primary School
16-22 Hutton Street
Thornbury AWA |
| 6. Fairfield Primary School
Langridge Street
Fairfield AWA | 13. Wales Street Primary School
corner Wales and Speight Streets
Thornbury AWA |
| 7. Northcote Baptist Church Hall
542 High Street
Northcote AWA | 14. Westgarth Primary School
313 Clarke Street
Northcote AWA |

LNWA: Limited or No Wheelchair Access
AWA: Assisted Wheelchair Access

More information : (03) 8619 1561 vec.vic.gov.au

@electionsvic /electionsvic (03) 8619 1561 vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission

Authorised by W Gately, AM, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.

Appendix 3.5 - Media releases and advisories

Phase	Headline	Dispatch
Issue of writ	Timeline for State by-elections set for October	Thursday 21 September 2017
Nominations	Call for candidates for Northcote by-election	Friday 22 September 2017
Close of roll (District enrolment figures)	Almost 50,000 to head for polls in Northcote	Wednesday 4 October 2017
Close of nominations and start of early voting period	Candidates announced for Northcote by-election	Thursday 19 October 2017
Early and election day voting period	Voting options for Northcote electors	Tuesday 14 November 2017
Election day media opportunities	Northcote by-election: Media photo/film opportunities and results	Wednesday 15 November 2017

Appendix 3.6 - Direct mail

Product	Content	Volume dispatched	Dispatch
Enrolment letter to households	Key election dates and how to check and update your enrolment	30,567	Friday 22 September 2017
Election Guide to households	Voting options, voting locations and contact information	25,482	Monday 9 October 2017

Appendix 3.7 - Enrolment letter to households

Important information: **Northcote District by-election**

To the householder

Are you correctly enrolled?

A by-election for your District is being held on Saturday 18 November 2017. By law, if you are an Australian citizen over the age of 18, you must be enrolled at your current address once you have lived there for one month.

If you've moved since you last enrolled, or have changed your name or post office box, you must ensure your enrolment details are up to date by **8.00 pm on Thursday 28 September**.

If you are an Australian citizen, aged 18 or over and you are not enrolled, you need to enrol immediately.

How do you check if you are on the roll?

Check online at enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au or call 1300 805 478.

Enrolling or updating your enrolment online

To enrol or update your details online, just visit enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au and complete an electronic enrolment update; there is no need for paper forms.

If you are enrolling for the first time, you will need a driver licence number, Australian passport number or a person who is already on the electoral roll in Victoria to confirm your identity.

Enrolling or updating your enrolment with a paper form

Paper enrolment forms are available at any post office or Australian Electoral Commission office.

Alternatively, visit vec.vic.gov.au to download a printable form.

Completed enrolment forms should be mailed immediately to the Victorian Electoral Commission, Reply Paid 66506, Melbourne, Victoria, 8001 (no stamp is required). You can also email a scanned copy to elector@vec.vic.gov.au or deliver the form in person to one of the offices listed below:

- Australian Electoral Commission, 621 High Street, Thornbury
- Victorian Electoral Commission, Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne

You must ensure that you're enrolled and that your details are correct by **8.00 pm on Thursday 28 September**.

Do you have to enrol?

Enrolling and keeping your enrolment details up-to-date are compulsory. However, if you have never enrolled or have let your details lapse, you will not be penalised if you enrol for this by-election.

Voting in the by-election

The VEC will write to all households within Northcote District before election day providing information about the various voting options that will be available.

If you are registered as a General Postal Voter, your ballot material will be mailed to you from **Monday 23 October**.


Warwick Gately, AM
Electoral Commissioner

**Check your enrolment online at
enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au or call 1300 805 478**

Authorised by W. Gately, AM, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.



@electionsvic




/electionsvic

Victorian Electoral Commission



Appendix 3.8 - Election Guide to households



Northcote By-election
18 November 2017

Important Information

Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Where can I vote?


You can vote at any of the following voting centres between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm on Saturday 18 November. To speed up the roll mark-off process, you can bring ID, but this is optional.


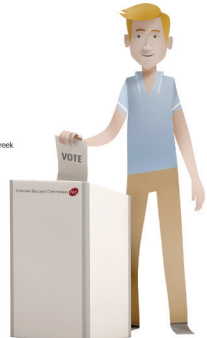
1. Alfred Nuttall Kindergarten 34 Separation Street Fairfield LNWA	8. Penders Grove Primary School 370 Victoria Road Thornbury AWA	Early voting centres for Northcote District
2. All Saints Parish Hall corner High and Walker Streets Northcote LNWA	9. Preston South Primary School 56b Hotham Street Preston AWA	116 Station Street Fairfield AWA
3. Alphington Primary School Yarralea Street Alphington LNWA	10. Santa Maria College 50 Separation Street Northcote AWA	Level 11, 530 Collins Street Melbourne AWA
4. Bell Primary School 78A Oakover Road Preston AWA	11. Thornbury High School 238 Collins Street Thornbury AWA	Factory 2, 130-138 Link Road (enter off Reid Way) Melbourne Airport IWA
5. Croxton School 159-165 Beaconsfield Parade Northcote AWA	12. Thornbury Primary School 16-22 Hutton Street Thornbury AWA	IWA Independent Wheelchair Access AWA Assisted Wheelchair Access LNWA Limited or No Wheelchair Access
6. Fairfield Primary School Langridge Street Fairfield AWA	13. Wales Street Primary School corner Wales and Speight Streets Thornbury AWA	
7. Northcote Baptist Church Hall 542 High Street Northcote AWA	14. Westgarth Primary School 313 Clarke Street Northcote AWA	


Northcote By-election

Saturday 18 November 2017
Voting between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm

Don't risk a fine!
All voters enrolled for Northcote District as at 28 September 2017 MUST vote in this by-election.
Not sure if this means you? Check online at vec.vic.gov.au, or call us on (03) 8619 1561 to find out.






Want to get reminders for the by-election?

Sign up for SMS and email alerts for important alerts during the Northcote District by-election. Register now at vec.vic.gov.au

Who can vote?

All Australian citizens aged 18 or over and enrolled in Northcote District must vote. If you have never enrolled, you can enrol and vote on the spot. Just bring one of these documents when you visit a voting centre:

- a driver licence or learner permit
- a current council rates notice in your name
- a current electricity bill in your name for your home address or
- a current Victorian identification, such as a Proof of Age card.



Is voting compulsory?

Yes. Voting is compulsory if you were enrolled for Northcote District at 8.00 pm on Thursday 28 September.
You may be fined if you do not vote.

Can I vote early?

If you can't get to a voting centre on election day, you can vote at any early voting centre listed below:

- 116 Station Street
Fairfield **AWA**
- Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne **AWA**
- Factory 2, 130-138 Link Road
(enter off Reid Way)
Melbourne Airport **IWA**

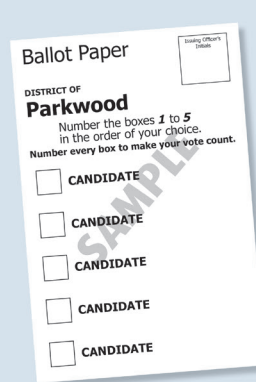

IWA Independent Wheelchair Access
AWA Assisted Wheelchair Access
LNWA Limited or No Wheelchair Access

How to complete your ballot paper

When you vote in a State by-election, you complete one ballot paper. For your vote to count, it is important that you complete this ballot paper correctly.

Put the number 1 in the box next to the name of the candidate you most want to see elected, then number ALL the other boxes in the order of your choice.

Remember: number all the boxes on the ballot paper. Do not use ticks or crosses.

Need more information?
Call (03) 8619 1561 or visit vec.vic.gov.au

For enquiries in languages other than English call our interpreting service:
• 0800 9209 0100 Arabic • 0800 9209 0101 Bosnian • 0800 9209 0102 Cantonese • 0800 9209 0103 Croatian • 0800 9209 0104 Dari • 0800 9209 0105 Dinka • 0800 9209 0106 Greek • 0800 9209 0107 Italian • 0800 9209 0108 Korean • 0800 9209 0109 Macedonian • 0800 9209 0110 Mandarin • 0800 9209 0111 Persian • 0800 9209 0112 Russian • 0800 9209 0113 Serbian • 0800 9209 0114 Somali • 0800 9209 0115 Spanish • 0800 9209 0116 Turkish • 0800 9209 0117 Vietnamese • All other non-English languages 0800 9209 0118

Appendix 4: Analysis of informal votes

After each State election and by-election, the VEC analyses the incidence and nature of informal voting at that election. The VEC aims to maximise participation by Victorians in their democracy, and knowledge of the types of mistakes that voters made can assist the VEC to achieve this goal.

In the Northcote District by-election, 1,940 votes were informal (5.10% of total votes). This was greater than at the November 2014 State election, when 4.22% of the votes were informal. The actual number of informal votes increased by 227, despite a decline in the total number of votes. On the other hand, informal voting at the Northcote District by-election was lower than the average of the past five by-elections (7.14%); in fact it is the lowest informal voting rate at a by-election for 17 years, since the 2010 Altona by-election (4.96%).

The number and range of candidates can affect the informal voting rate. The twelve candidates for the Northcote District by-election was an increase from the seven candidates for the Northcote District in the 2014 State election. This may have contributed to the informality rate, which was 0.88% higher at the by-election than at the 2014 State election.

The Liberal Party did not stand a candidate at the by-election. In by-elections over the past decade where both major parties were standing, the informal vote was a median of 1.33 percentage points lower than at the preceding State election. In contrast, where a major party was not standing, the informal vote was 2.06 percentage points higher than at the State election. It appears that some party supporters prefer to vote informally than to vote for another party or candidate.

Informal voting rates at voting centres ranged from 3.69% at Croxton to 9.22% at Darebin Parklands. There was a clear geographic pattern in the incidence of informal voting: the informal voting rate was highest in the north-eastern corner of the district, and declined progressively across the district to be lowest at the south-western edge. The same pattern was evident at the 2014 State election. Social and demographic factors may help explain this geographic variation. Very few postal votes were informal (3.2%), probably because postal voters had more time to consider their vote, while the early informal voting rate (4.6%) was close to the district average.

In the survey of informal ballot papers, the VEC used the same categories as in its analyses of informal ballot papers since the 2006 State election. These categories are described in Table 1.

Category	Description
Blank	The bulk of these ballot papers were presumably deliberately informal, though they might include ballot papers lodged by people who had difficulties with the whole voting process.
Numbers – 1 only	
Numbers – insufficient	Ballot papers including insufficient numbers to constitute a formal vote.
Numbers – apparently deliberate	Ballot papers including number sequences such as '1's, or '0', or '1', '10', '300', which indicate an intention to cast an informal vote.
Numbers – other	
Ticks/crosses – preference	Ballot papers indicating a clear preference for a candidate through a single tick or cross.
Ticks/crosses – apparently deliberate	Ballot papers with ticks or crosses in every square, indicating an intention to reject all the candidates.
Ticks/crosses – other	
Writing – apparently deliberate	Ballot papers with writing or drawings indicating opposition to all the candidates, including those with a cross over the whole paper.
Writing – other	Vague scrawls not indicating any intention.

Table 1: Categories used by the VEC in analysis of ballot papers

Table 2 shows the results of the survey for the by-election and for Northcote District at the 2014 State election.

Category	2017 by-election		2014 State election	
Blank	398	20.5%	373	24.2%
Numbers – 1 only	110	5.7%	319	20.7%
Numbers – insufficient	673	34.7%	182	11.8%
Numbers – deliberate	121	6.2%	86	5.6%
Numbers – other	177	9.1%	181	11.8%
Ticks/crosses – preference	73	3.8%	128	8.3%
Ticks/crosses – deliberate	86	4.4%	124	8.1%
Ticks/crosses – other	15	0.8%	25	1.6%
Writing – deliberate	204	10.5%	93	6.0%
Writing – other	83	4.3%	29	1.9%
TOTAL	1,940		1,540	

Table 2: Results of survey of informal ballot papers cast for Northcote District at 2017 By-election and at 2014 State Election - detailed categories

Ballot papers with insufficient numbers were by far the largest category of informal votes, with 673 votes, or 34.7% of the total. This was a significant increase from the 182 ballot papers (11.8%) with insufficient numbers recorded in the informality survey from the Northcote District State election in 2014 (the survey did not review all informal ballot papers in the election). The larger number of candidates at the by-election helps explain the increase in this category.

Blank ballot papers were the second largest category with 398 votes or 20.5% of the total. In the 2014 State election this was the largest category, with 24.2% of the total informal ballot papers surveyed.

Ballot papers with writing indicating an intentional informal vote were the third largest category, with 10.5% of the total. This was an increase from the 6% recorded at the State election, possibly because of the absence of a Liberal candidate at the by-election.

As at other by-elections, the proportion of informal ballot papers with a single 1 (5.7%) was much lower than at the State election (20.7%). Without the confusion of the Upper House ballot paper (on which most voters vote '1' above the line), very few by-election voters made this mistake.

Table 3 shows the results of the survey in broader categories.

Category	2017 by-election		2014 State election	
Blank	398	20.5%	373	24.2%
Numbers	1,081	55.7%	768	49.9%
Ticks/crosses	174	9.0%	277	18.0%
Writing	287	14.8%	122	7.9%
TOTAL	1,940		1,540	

Table 3: Results of survey of informal ballot papers cast for Northcote District at the 2017 By-election and at the 2014 State Election – broad categories

Numbering errors were a large category at both the by-election and 2014 State election. Ticks and crosses were a small group in the by-election - only half of the 18% in the State election.

Table 4 groups the various categories of deliberately informal votes and shows the result when the blank ballot papers are added to the marked ballot papers that were deliberately informal. It also groups the ballot papers that indicated a clear preference (either through the number “1” or a single tick or cross).

Category	2017 by-election		2014 State election	
Apparently deliberate	411	21.2%	303	19.7%
Apparently deliberate including blank	809	41.7%	676	43.9%
Indicating preferences	856	44.1%	629	40.8%

Table 4: Results of survey of informal ballot papers cast for Northcote District at 2017 By-election and at 2014 State Election - deliberately informal and preference votes

There was little change from 2014 State election to the by-election. In both elections, almost half of the informal votes were apparently deliberate. As well, almost half the votes indicated a clear preference, but could not be counted under electoral law



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