

Report to Parliament
2023 Mulgrave District by-election

April 2024



Letter of Transmittal

The Hon. Shaun Leane MLC
President of the Legislative Council
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House
Melbourne

The Hon. Maree Edwards MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House
Melbourne

Dear Presiding Officers

Pursuant to section 8(2)(b) of the Electoral Act 2002, I submit this report on the administration and conduct of the Mulgrave District by-election held on Saturday 18 November 2023.

Yours sincerely



Sven Bluemmel

Electoral Commissioner
30 April 2024



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(Victorian Electoral Commission)
April 2024

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Report to Parliament

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation, as the traditional custodians of the lands on which the VEC works and where we conduct our business.

We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present, and emerging. The VEC is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Note

This Report to Parliament is also available on the VEC's website at vec.vic.gov.au in PDF format.

Foreword

On 18 November 2023, Mulgrave District selected their next member of Parliament.

The 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was the second State by-election to occur since the 2022 State election and 2023 Narracan District supplementary election.

Like the Warrandyte district by-election held in August the same year, the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was an opportunity to implement some initiatives relating to the identified areas for improvement and continued success. These areas were articulated as operational commitments in the Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election, and progress on these commitments is outlined in this report.

This by-election saw operational challenges but also opportunities to trial new voting experiences, with the implementation of a reduced early voting period.

Significant efforts were undertaken to facilitate the delivery of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election in the midst of preparations for the 2024 Local Government elections and concurrent Local Government by-elections.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sven Bluemmel', written in a cursive style.

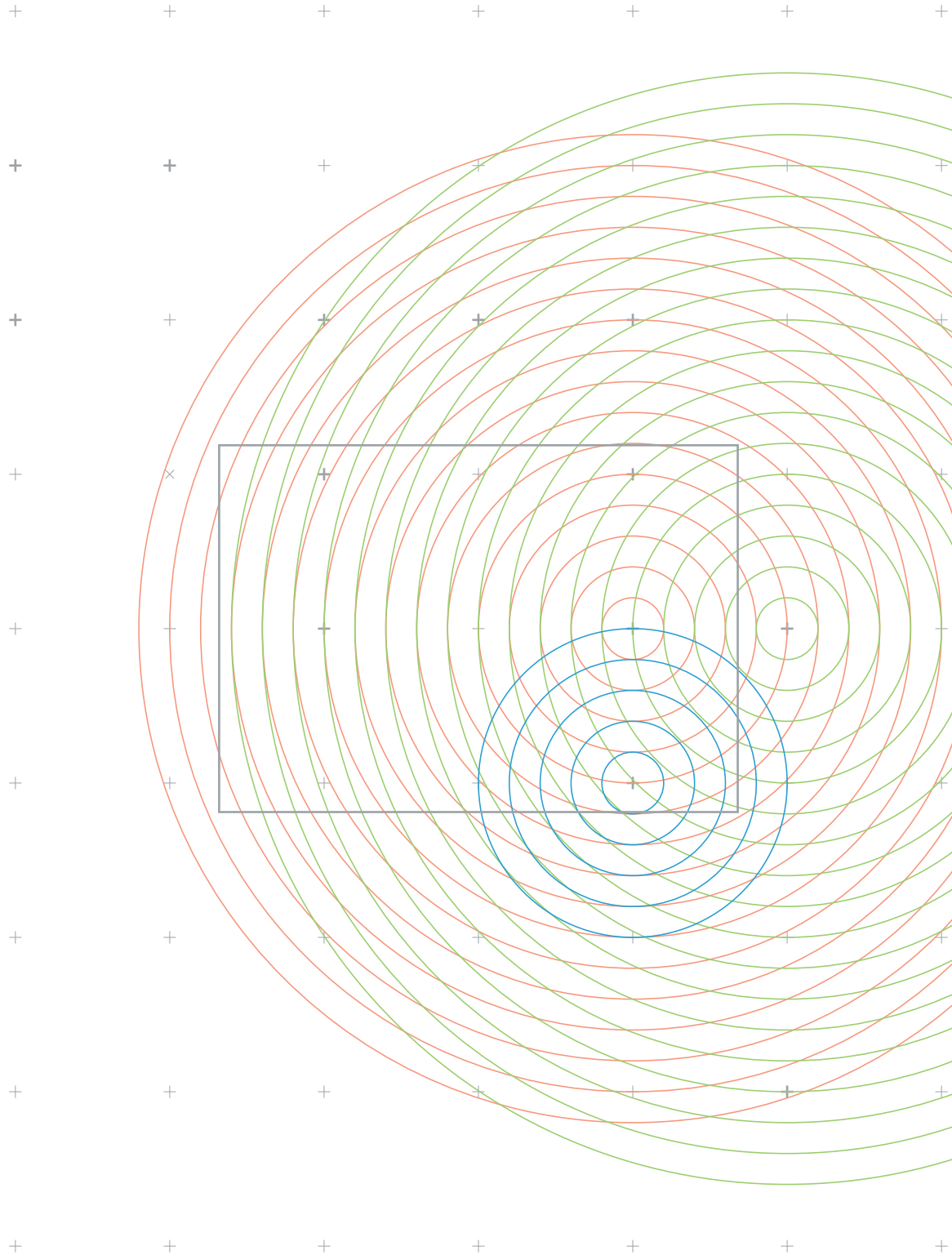
Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner

Votes by type (Front cover)

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

- Early voting attendance
- Election day attendance
- Postal (and other)

— 1 ring = 1,000 voters



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Glossary

List of definitions

Term	Definition
2-candidate preferred (2CP)	A count conducted for statistical purposes, involving the distribution of preferences to the two candidates considered most likely to be in the lead after a distribution of preferences.
Absent vote	A vote cast by an elector on election day at a voting centre that is located outside the electorate for which they are enrolled.
Attendance voting	Any voting method which involves casting a vote in-person at a voting centre.
Candidate	<p>A person who is nominated under section 69 of the Electoral Act to stand for election to Parliament.</p> <p>For political donation disclosures and reporting under Part 12 of the Electoral Act, a candidate is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> a person who has been selected by a registered political party to be a candidate in an election; or> a person other than a member of a registered political party, who has publicly announced an intention to be a candidate in an election.
Centralised Activity Site (CAS)	Central location where multiple activities take place, including postal vote processing, TAV and extraction and counting activities.
Declaration vote	A vote that requires a written declaration by the voter. There are several types of declaration vote: postal votes, absent votes, provisional votes and marked-as-voted votes.
Dis-information	False or inaccurate information that is intended to mislead or deceive.
Distribution of preferences	If no candidate in a Legislative Assembly election has an absolute majority of first preferences during the count, or in a Legislative Council election, if fewer candidates obtain the quota required to be elected than the number of vacancies to be filled, a preference distribution is conducted. In a Legislative Assembly election, the candidate with fewest votes is excluded and their votes are passed on to other candidates according to voters' preferences. In a Legislative Council election, the votes in surplus of the quota from the candidate or candidates declared elected are distributed or the candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and their votes are passed on to other candidates according to voters' preferences. This process is repeated until the vacancy or vacancies are filled.
District	One of 88 electorates represented by a member of the Legislative Assembly.
Early voting	Electors can vote before election day at an early voting centre.
Election manager	A senior election official appointed by the Electoral Commissioner to conduct an election for an electorate.
Field staff	Staff directly supporting election office operations including voting centre staff and metropolitan hubs.

Term	Definition
General Postal Voter (GPV)	A person who is automatically mailed a ballot pack for all elections in their area for reasons such as illness, age, remote location or being a registered overseas elector.
How-to-vote card (HTVC)	Any electoral material that: includes a representation of a ballot paper, including partial or purported partial representations of a ballot paper; or lists the names of any or all of the candidates for an election with a number indicating an order of voting preference against the names of any or all of those candidates.
Independent candidate	A candidate at an election who is not endorsed by a registered political party.
Informal vote	A ballot paper that is cast but cannot be included in the count because the voter's intention is not clear or the ballot paper has been completed incorrectly.
Leased site	A specific building site leased for the purpose of election operation.
Low sensory voting	Attendance voting where the voting centre environment is adjusted for voters who are neurodiverse.
Marked-as-voting vote	A vote issued to a person who claims not to have voted at the election despite their name being marked off the electoral roll as having already voted.
Mis-information	False or inaccurate information that is spread regardless of intent to mislead or deceive.
Mobile voting	A voting centre temporarily set up at a site such as an aged care facility or prison, to assist electors to vote who may experience barriers to accessing other voting methods.
Ordinary vote	A vote cast by an elector on election day at a voting centre that is located in the electorate for which they are enrolled, excluding provisional and marked-as-voted votes.
Party/candidate worker	A person who assists a candidate by distributing how-to-vote cards or other electoral material outside a voting centre.
Postal voting	Electors can apply to have their ballot papers mailed to them. Electors are provided with an envelope to securely return their ballot papers to be included in the count.
Priority community	A community that is underrepresented in elections in terms of enrolment or turnout or overrepresented in terms of informality.
Provisional vote	A vote issued to a person who claims to be entitled to vote at an election and the name of that person is not on, or cannot be found on, the electoral roll.
Recheck	A routine step of all election counts, in which ballot papers that have been counted are checked again for formality, correct sorting to first preference, and correct reconciliation of totals.
Registered political party	A political party that is on the VEC's Register of Political Parties. Registration entitles a political party to have the registered party details, including a registered logo, placed next to its candidate(s) names on Legislative Assembly election ballot paper(s) or above the group name above the line on Legislative Council election ballot paper(s).

Term	Definition
Scrutineer	A person appointed by a candidate to observe certain procedures on the candidate's behalf at an election. Scrutineers are permitted to observe voting, scrutiny and counting procedures during an election.
Senior election official	An election official with advanced training to manage electoral operations.
Silent elector	A person who has been granted silent elector status by the VEC (or by the Australian Electoral Commission on behalf of Victoria) having satisfactorily shown that printing their address on an electoral roll would place their or their family's personal safety at risk.
Supplementary election	Under section 72(2) of the Electoral Act, a supplementary election must be held in the event of a failed election to fill the vacancy that the failed election had intended to fill.
Telephone assisted voting (TAV)	A secure voting facility provided by the VEC for electors prescribed by the regulations to use this service. Use of this service involves casting a secret vote over a telephone service.
Turnout	The proportion of electors on the register of electors who voted in an election. Turnout can be measured by the number of electors marked off the roll and by the number of votes cast in an election. As not all electors who attend a voting centre end up submitting ballot papers, these measures can produce different turnout figures.
Voting centre	A venue appointed by the VEC for voting at an election as an early voting centre, a mobile voting centre, or an election day voting centre.
Writ	An order by the Governor or Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to the Electoral Commissioner that an election be held. The writ specifies key election dates.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Long version
2CP	2-candidate preferred
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AWA	Assisted wheelchair access
CAS	Centralised Activity Site
Electoral Act	<i>Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)</i>
HTVC	How-to-vote card
IWA	Independent wheelchair access
LMS	Learning Management System
LNWA	Limited to no wheelchair access
OHS	Occupational health and safety
PES	Public Enquiry Service
TAV	Telephone assisted voting
VCAT	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
VEC	Victorian Electoral Commission
VPSC	Victorian Public Service Commission

1. Introduction

Electors and votes



47,142

Enrolled electors

15,835

Early attendance votes

4,249

Postal votes

17,787

Election day attendance votes

781

Other vote types*

*Telephone assisted voting, provisional, marked-as-voted and mobile voting

Candidates



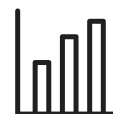
10

Candidates

17

Registered How-to-vote cards

Statistics



80.94%

Voter turnout

5.54%

Informal votes

Voting centres



2

Early voting centres

10

Election day voting centres

Following the resignation of the Member for Mulgrave District, and in accordance with section 61(2) of the Electoral Act (2002) (Vic) (the Electoral Act), the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly issued a writ for a by-election. This was the second State by-election conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) since the 2022 Victorian State election and 2023 Narracan District supplementary election.

The VEC liaised with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to confirm a suitable election timeline for the by-election.

A writ was subsequently issued on Monday 23 October 2023 for the Mulgrave District by election, with election day fixed for Saturday 18 November 2023.

1.1 About the VEC

The VEC is responsible for the conduct of fair, efficient and impartial elections in accordance with the law. The Electoral Commissioner is appointed by the Governor-in-Council for a ten-year term. Under the Electoral Act, the Electoral Commissioner is independent of the government of the day and reports directly to Parliament. The responsibilities of the VEC are to:

- › conduct parliamentary elections, by-elections, and referendums
- › conduct local government elections, by-elections, and countbacks
- › Provide administrative and technical support to State electoral boundary reviews and local government electoral structure reviews, and lead local government ward boundary reviews.
- › conduct certain statutory elections
- › consider and report to the Minister responsible on issues affecting the conduct of parliamentary elections, including administrative issues requiring legislative remedy
- › ensure the enrolment of eligible electors
- › prepare electoral rolls for parliamentary elections, voters' rolls for local government elections, jury lists, and the provision of enrolment information to members of Parliament and registered political parties
- › contribute to public understanding and awareness of elections and electoral matters through information and education programs

- › conduct and promote research into electoral matters that are in the public interest
- › administer and regulate Victoria's political funding and donation laws
- › regulate obligations under the Electoral Act
- › report to Parliament on the VEC's activities.

1.2 Environmental changes

Workforce challenges

Following the significant investment the VEC undertook to grow its staffing database for the 2022 State election, the VEC was able to re-engage a significant portion of the staffing profile of Mulgrave District from the 2022 State election for the purpose of the by-election. Accordingly, it was unnecessary to utilise labour hire agencies or Victorian Public Service secondments to further complement the staffing requirements for the event. See **Chapter 4 – Venues and Resourcing** for more details.

Limited property market

The availability of commercial properties suitable for use as election venues for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election continued to be limited by low vacancy rates in the commercial rental market. Availability and suitability were further limited by a reluctance of owners and landlords to enter into short term leases, or to make an investment in any improvements to the site. Accordingly, the VEC continues to respond by flexibly adjusting its property footprint, to accommodate the state of the property market. See **Chapter 4 – Venues and Resourcing** for more details.

1.3 Political environment

Scrutiny, misinformation and disinformation

Amidst an evolving political environment, the VEC is subject to more intense scrutiny than ever before. The VEC is committed to safeguarding electoral integrity and public trust to continue delivering elections with trusted outcomes. Misinformation and disinformation are cross-jurisdictional concerns that pose a significant challenge to the VEC because they arise out of broader social trends that cannot be directly reversed by the VEC. The VEC did take preventative action to 'pre-bunk' misinformation regarding the availability of the writ for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election – a common myth aimed at undermining the legitimacy of elections,

which emerged during the 2022 State election. The VEC will continue to identify emerging trends in misinformation, disinformation and heightened scrutiny to ensure that critical election activities are not obstructed.

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
The VEC will continue to identify emerging trends in intensified scrutiny and electoral mis- and dis-information campaigns, and responding as required to ensure that critical election activities are not undermined.	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>

1.4 Election timeline

Timeline	Date
Issue of writ	Monday 23 October 2023
Close of rolls	Monday 30 October 2023 (8 pm)
Close of nominations	<p>Wednesday 1 November 2023 for registered political parties</p> <p>Thursday 2 November 2023 for independent candidates</p>
Commencement of how-to-vote card registration	Friday 3 November 2023
Commencement of early voting	Wednesday 8 November 2023
Final day for submission of how-to-vote cards for registration by the VEC (12 noon)	Friday 10 November 2023
Close of submission of postal vote applications	Wednesday 15 November 2023 (6 pm)
Close of early voting (6 pm)	Friday 17 November 2023 (6 pm)
Election day	Saturday 18 November 2023
Last day that votes can be admitted (6 pm)	Friday 24 November 2023
Return of writ	On or before Saturday 9 December 2023 (Writ was returned Monday 4 December 2023)

Table 1: Timeline of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

Executive Summary

Initiatives

Parliamentary by-elections provide the VEC an opportunity to design, implement and evaluate new approaches to operational challenges. By-elections are suitable for refinements in the operating model as any initiative deployed is done so in a controlled manner at a limited scale, that if successful, could be expanded to a full state election. Only the initiative is evaluated and not the by-election as a whole.

The VEC reviewed the 12 Key Recommendations and 16 Operational Commitments within the 2022 State election Report to Parliament to identify one suitable initiative and which operational improvements could be tested in the Mulgrave District by-election that would advance the electoral landscape. Each of these commitments and recommendations directly aligned to meeting one of the VEC's 4 strategic outcomes identified in its Strategy 2027; reinforcing public trust, responding to a complex environment, improving the voter experience, and prioritising staff safety and wellbeing.

For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election the VEC trialled the initiative of a shorter early voting period, focused on the strategic outcome of responding to a complex environment and identified the operational commitment of expanding the number of early voting centres for further testing, focused on improving the voter experience. See **Chapter 3 – Initiatives**.

In addition to testing the operational commitment relating to the expansion of the number of early voting centres operational commitment, this report includes an update on progress made on 8 other of the 16 operational commitments made in the 2022 Victorian State election Report to Parliament. Each commitment seeks to improve operations at future elections aligned to the VEC's strategic outcomes. These commitments are visually highlighted throughout the report with the use of colour (burgundy) and bordered with lines. See **Appendix 2 – Operational Commitments**.

Key recommendation

For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election the VEC trialled a shorter early voting period. See **Chapter 3.1 – Shortened early voting period trial**.

The 2022 State election report to Parliament Recommendation 1: The Electoral Act sought modernisation and reform of the Electoral Act to address the unsustainability the election timeline and changes in the electoral landscape. The trial tested an initiative to alleviate one aspect of that recommendation that presents an immediate risk to the successful delivery of future elections at a specific point in the timeline. Recommendation 1 is reproduced below¹. See **3.1 – Shortened early voting period trial** for the full recommendation in relation to **Printing ballot papers in time to commence early voting**.

Evaluation of the shorter early voting period trial confirmed that having fewer days of voting did not impact the number of votes cast in person during the early voting period in any significant way and electors also appear to have made greater use of the extended voting hours provided. Critically, it eased the pressure point of only 67 hours to print and deliver sufficient ballot papers for the commencement of the early voting period, by providing an additional 48 hours in the timeline.

Responding to a complex environment

Recommendation 1: The Electoral Act

The VEC recommends that a holistic review of the Electoral Act is undertaken, to address the unsustainability of the election timeline and respond to the complexities of the modern electoral landscape. Acknowledging a comprehensive review may take time, recommendations to alleviate immediate risks to the successful delivery of future elections at specific points in the timeline have been provided.

¹ Report to Parliament – 2022 Victorian State election and 2023 Narracan District supplementary election, October 2023, page 13

Commitments

For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election the VEC further tested the expansion of early voting centres operational commitment. See **Chapter 3.2 – Management of Occupational Health and Safety Risks**.

As demand increases amongst Victorians to vote early, the VEC is alert to the corresponding rise in the OHS risk profile associated with increasing the number of early voting centres to respond.

In response to concerns raised in relation to one of the early voting centres for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, OHS treatments and controls were promptly deployed for that site to mitigate the risks to all electoral participants. This has resulted in identification of an OHS uplift for all future voting centres for all electoral participants upon establishment as well as in response to specific incidents.

Improving the voter experience

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment

The VEC will increase the number of early voting centres at future elections to respond to the increasing demand amongst Victorian voters to vote early.

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

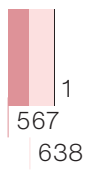
Mulgrave District had one early voting centre for the 2022 State election and two for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC commits to ensuring the OHS risk profile of the site and its surrounds is understood and treatments and controls are appropriately deployed.

The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

2. Election service management

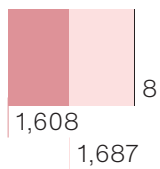
18 – 19 years old (1,206)



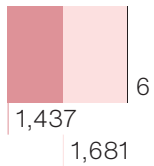
Gender

- Female
- Male
- Unspecified

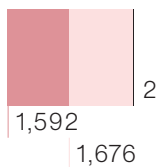
20 – 24 (3,303)



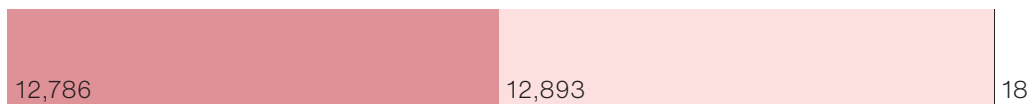
25 – 29 (3,124)



30 – 34 (3,270)



35 – 69 (25,697)



70 + (10,542)

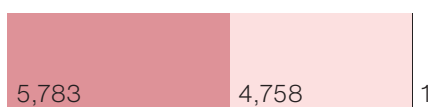


Figure 2: Electoral roll breakdown for Mulgrave District by age and gender

2.1 Planning and governance

Planning

Once a vacancy occurs, a writ outlining the timeline for the by-election must be issued by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly within one month.

As for a general election, State by-elections are conducted by attendance voting and alternative voting options are available for electors unable to attend a voting centre on election day. Unlike a State general election, the VEC has no standing infrastructure in place in readiness for a by-election.

The VEC developed a service plan for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election which detailed the delivery of the election and included information regarding enrolment, public awareness, outreach services, recruitment of election officials, the hiring of election offices and voting centres, services for candidates, the production of ballot material and roll products, early voting services, election day voting services, postal voting services, counting activities, complaints management, compulsory voting enforcement, and evaluation and reporting.

The service plan for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election outlined seven major operational objectives:

- › create a roll for the Mulgrave District
- › provide every eligible elector with a voting experience that is safe, convenient, easy to access, easy to understand, timely to their requirements, respectful, courteous, and confidential
- › assist candidates, registered political parties and other participants to meet nomination and other compliance requirements
- › provide electoral information to all stakeholders in a format that is easy to understand and use, easy to find, rapid and deliverable through a variety of media
- › ensure all votes cast are accounted for, and counted accurately and efficiently, with results available in a timely manner
- › maintain stakeholder confidence and trust in the VEC's capacity to deliver impartial, transparent, accurate and efficient electoral outcomes
- › ensure a safe and OHS compliant environment for our staff, contractors and third-party providers in undertaking work on behalf of the VEC.

Governance

In line with the planning timeline for the election, the VEC implemented a robust governance framework to support the internal management of election delivery. A cohesive election management program, underpinned by strong risk profiling, issue management and business continuity planning, enabled oversight of both successes and emerging pinch points.

2.2 Budget

The cost of conducting the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was \$680,485.

2.3 Resource management

The VEC is committed to managing resources in a way that minimises environmental impact across its operations. For some time, the VEC has been implementing changes to its practices to be more environmentally sustainable. The VEC used paper from the same source at the 2022 State election, 2023 Warrandyte District by-election, and 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

Other examples of sustainable practices across the delivery of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election included:

- › further expansion of electronic roll mark off to all election day voting centres earmarking the way for a reduction in the number of scannable rolls required for future events.
- › extending the provision of re-use and recycling facilities currently at VEC head office to all election venues
- › encouraging recycling of how-to-vote cards and other materials by providing clearly labelled recycling bins at voting centres and the election office
- › paper reduction strategies such as reducing the amount of paper sent to the election office for election use, continuing to provide instruction manuals in an online format, and the provision of electronic copies of reports where possible, careful consideration and planning of more environmentally sustainable transportation for election materials between Mulgrave and the VEC's head office and warehouse

The VEC encourages all stakeholders to embrace sustainable actions.

2.4 External service providers

For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, the VEC had service agreements and contracts in place for a range of specialist services, including:

- > Australia Post
- > ballot paper printing services
- > cardboard furniture and voting centre equipment
- > cartage and courier services
- > envelope production
- > information technology
- > mail-house services.

Arrangements with other organisations

Legal service providers

The VEC instructed the Victorian Government Solicitor to lead on any legal matters arising during the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. This arrangement ensured that any emerging matters could be dealt with in a timely fashion and streamlined the management of matters referred back to the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office.

Victoria Police

The VEC continued its strategic partnership with Victoria Police established during the 2022 State election. The partnership is led by dedicated relationship managers at both agencies, and Victoria Police has established a dedicated structure to coordinate its handling of election-related matters. Established referral procedures were in place to promptly alert police to emerging issues and allow for a police response to be coordinated.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

The VEC made arrangements with the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for tribunal members to be in place to promptly deal with any applications for review of the decisions in relation to the registration of political parties and how-to-vote cards.

Section 82A of the Electoral Act provides that if an application for review of a how-to-vote card decision is received, VCAT has until 5 pm on the next working day after receiving the application to determine a response.

At the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, there were no applications to VCAT.

Supreme Court of Victoria

Under section 176 of the Electoral Act, candidates may seek injunctions in certain circumstances where the conduct of a person may impact on the outcome of an election. The VEC is also able to seek an injunction under the same circumstances. These matters must be heard in the Supreme Court. At the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, there were no injunctions sought under section 176 of the Electoral Act.

The Court of Disputed Returns also sits in the Supreme Court and hears disputes to the validity of all types of State elections. At the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, there were no petitions made to the Court of Disputed Returns.

The VEC made arrangements with the Supreme Court to ensure it was ready to respond to any applications, including urgent matters on election day.

Department of Education and Training

Pursuant to section 67 of the *Electoral Act*, the VEC is able to utilise prescribed premises for the purpose of establishing an election day voting centre. The VEC worked with the Department of Education and Training to identify, inspect and operationalise select sites for 2022 State Election and were subsequently able to utilise similar sites for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, the VEC utilised 4 government schools as voting centres.

2.5 Enrolment and close of rolls

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

Age	Female	Male	Unspecified	Total
18-19	567	638	1	1,206
20-24	1,608	1,687	8	3,303
25-29	1,437	1,681	6	3,124
30-34	1,592	1,676	2	3,270
35-69	12,786	12,893	18	25,697
70+	5,783	4,758	1	10,542
Total	23,773	23,333	36	47,142

Table 2: Electoral roll breakdown for Mulgrave District by age and gender

Special elector categories

Where special circumstances affect an elector's enrolment, they may be eligible to enrol in a special category. Table 3 shows the number of electors enrolled in each special elector category for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

Special elector category	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
Silent electors	253
Itinerant (No fixed abode)	12
Overseas eligible electors	76
Antarctic	0
General Postal Voters – over 70 years old	562
General Postal Voters – all other categories	1,179
Total	2,082

Table 3: Special elector enrolment for Mulgrave District by category

Close of roll

The roll for the election closed at 8 pm on Monday 30 October 2023. The VEC worked closely with the AEC to ensure that enrolment data received by the close of roll was processed by the AEC within 24 hours. All electors who enrolled or updated their details in the weeks following the close of roll were contacted. Where applicable, electors were also advised they may attend a voting centre and complete an 'Application for Enrolment/Provisional Vote' to cast a provisional vote.

Change to roll	Mulgrave District transactions
New to roll	45
Change of address	873
Reinstatement	10
Deletions	79
Other (includes special category, GPV, silent)	340
Total	1,347

Table 4: All enrolment transactions for Mulgrave District processed between the issue of the writs on 23 October 2023 and close of roll on 30 October 2023

3. Initiatives

Number of voters marked off the roll

- 2023 Mulgrave District by-election
- 2023 Warrandyte District by-election

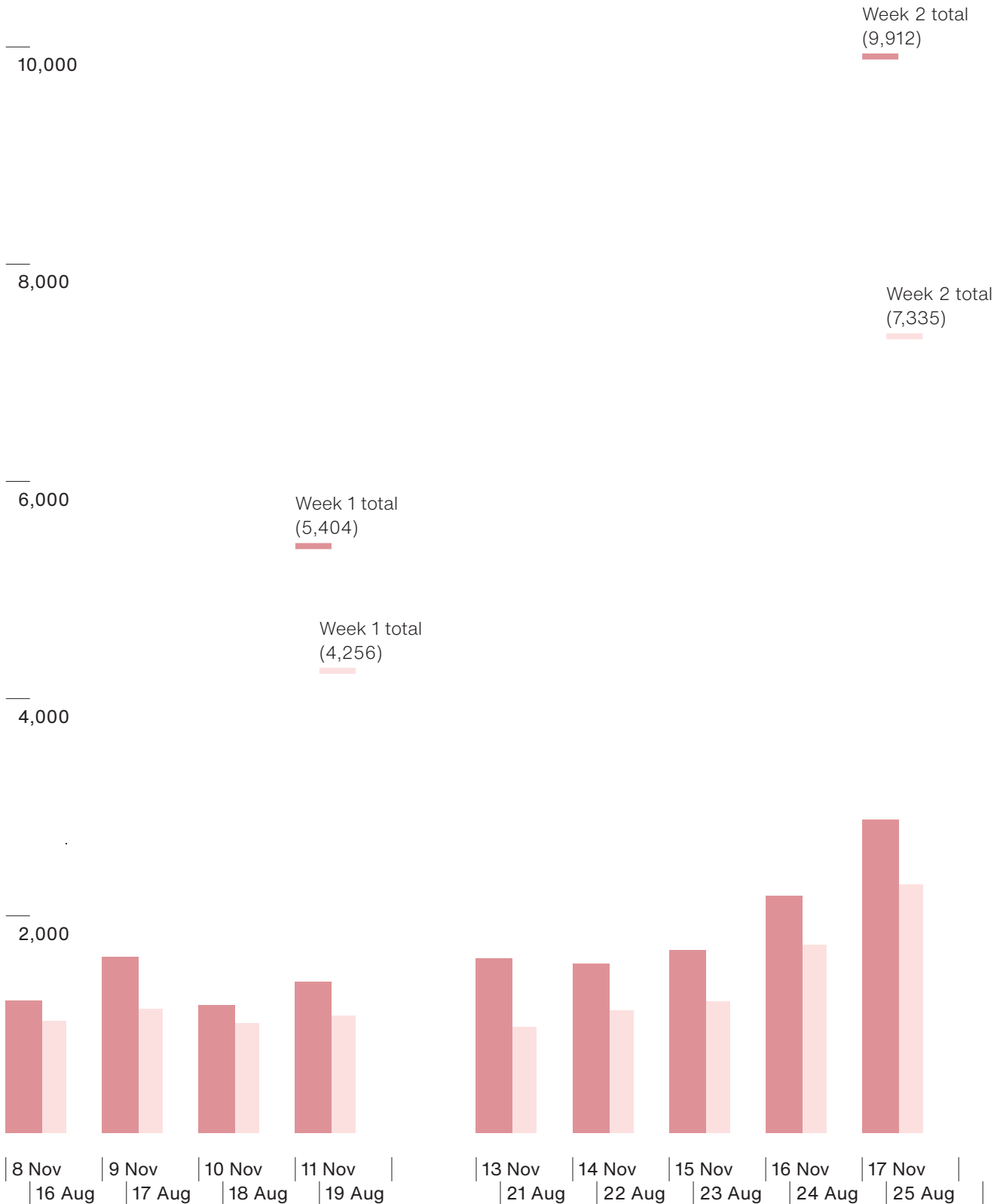


Figure 3: Early voting period data comparing the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election and the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

3.1 Shortened early voting period trial

The VEC operationalised an initiative to alleviate an immediate risk to the successful delivery of future elections at a specific point in the timeline — **Printing ballot papers in time to commence early voting.** This was tested by delaying the commencement of early voting to Wednesday 8 November, the day after the Victorian Melbourne Cup Day public holiday.

The primary objective was to ease a pressure point in election timeline by expanding the period to print and deliver sufficient ballot papers for the commencement of the early voting period from 67 hours to 115 hours in conjunction with assessing the impact of two fewer days of early voting at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election compared with recent similar electoral events.

The VEC conducted an internal evaluation of the trial in which 3 key findings were discovered.

Findings

1. Having two fewer days of early voting did not impact the number of votes cast in person during the early voting period in any significant way.
2. At all electoral events the trend is for more electors to be marked off the roll at early voting centres during the second week of the early voting period, peaking on the last 2 days.
3. Electors made greater use of the extended voting hours on each of the two Thursdays of the early voting period week at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election compared with the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election, the 2022 State election and the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election.

Finding 1: Having two fewer days of early voting did not impact the number of votes cast in person during the early voting period in any significant way.

More electors in total and as a proportion of all electors marked off the roll for all voting options were marked off the roll at early voting centres for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election than for the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election or the rate recorded for Mulgrave at the 2022 State election (38.13%).

² The raw figures presented throughout this chapter for votes cast in person at early voting centres is based on roll mark-offs and is therefore slightly different from ballots counted. Further, these figures for early voting centres do not include mobile voting or Telephone Assisted Voting (TAV) data. The percentage provided for each is calculated as a proportion of electors marked off the roll for all voting options.

Elections	Electors marked off the roll at EVCs	Proportion of mark-offs for all voting options
2022 State election	1,879,062	47.93%
Warrandyte District – 2022 State election	22,351	47.22%
Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	16,058	38.13%
2023 Narracan District supplementary election	19,282	48.60%
2023 Warrandyte District by-election	13,970	33.96%
2023 Mulgrave District by-election	15,316	40.12%

Table 5: Total numbers of electors marked off the roll at early voting centres and as a proportion of mark-offs for all voting options²

Finding 2: At all electoral events the trend is for more electors to be marked off the roll at early voting centres during the second week of the early voting period, peaking on the last 2 days.

It is generally the case that more electors are marked off the roll during the second week of the early period. At the 2022 State election, 57.60% of all mark-offs occurring during the early voting period were recorded in the second week. In Warrandyte District the proportion of mark-offs recorded in the second week of early voting was slightly above that for the state at 59.69%, while in Mulgrave it was below and closer to half at 52.96%.

The following table details daily mark-off data recorded during the early voting period at the 2022 State election and for Warrandyte and Mulgrave districts.

2022 State election			Warrandyte District – 2022 State election			Mulgrave District – 2022 State election		
Early voting day/period	No. of voters marked off the roll	% of voters marked off the roll	Early voting day/period	No. of voters marked off the roll	% of voters marked off the roll	Early voting day/period	No. of voters marked off the roll	% of voters marked off the roll
Monday 14 November	112,619	5.99%	Monday 14 November	1,188	5.32%	Monday 14 November	1,134	7.06%
Tuesday 15 November	149,138	7.94%	Tuesday 15 November	1,640	7.34%	Tuesday 15 November	1,413	8.80%
Wednesday 16 November	126,076	6.71%	Wednesday 16 November	1,345	6.02%	Wednesday 16 November	1,178	7.34%
Thursday 17 November	150,355	8.00%	Thursday 17 November	1,742	7.79%	Thursday 17 November	1,434	8.93%
Friday 18 November	138,295	7.36%	Friday 18 November	1,621	7.25%	Friday 18 November	1,183	7.37%
Saturday 19 November	120,320	6.40%	Saturday 19 November	1,473	6.59%	Saturday 19 November	1,211	7.54%
Week 1 total	796,803	42.40%	Week 1 total	9,009	40.31%	Week 1 total	7,553	47.04%
Monday 21 November	164,255	8.74%	Monday 21 November	1,950	8.72%	Monday 21 November	1,417	8.82%
Tuesday 22 November	184,614	9.82%	Tuesday 22 November	2,249	10.06%	Tuesday 22 November	1,564	9.74%
Wednesday 23 November	198,674	10.57%	Wednesday 23 November	2,374	10.62%	Wednesday 23 November	1,690	10.52%
Thursday 24 November	262,860	13.99%	Thursday 24 November	3,346	14.97%	Thursday 24 November	2,058	12.82%
Friday 25 November	271,856	14.47%	Friday 25 November	3,423	15.31%	Friday 25 November	1,776	11.06%
Week 2 total	1,082,259	57.60%	Week 2 total	13,342	59.69%	Week 2 total	8,505	52.96%
Overall and as a proportion of total votes counted	1,879,062	47.93%		22,351	47.22%		16,058	38.13%

Table 6: Early voting period data comparing the state overall, Mulgrave and Warrandyte districts at the 2022 State elections

For the Mulgrave by-election a significant proportion of early voting electors (approximately 65%) when compared to the state average were marked off the roll during the second week of the early voting period, which is to be expected with 2 fewer days the week prior.

The following table shows nearly double the number of mark-offs during the early voting period at the Mulgrave by-election were recorded in the second week, peaking closer to election day.

2022 Narracan District supplementary election			2023 Warrandyte District by-election			2023 Mulgrave District by-election		
Early voting day/period	No. of voters marked off the roll	% of voters marked off the roll	Early voting day/period	No. of voters marked off the roll	% of voters marked off the roll	Early voting day/period	No. of voters marked off the roll	% of voters marked off the roll
Monday 16 January	1,046	5.42%	Monday 14 August	1,260	9.02%	—	—	—
Tuesday 17 January	1,404	7.28%	Tuesday 15 August	1,119	8.01%	—	—	—
Wednesday 18 January	1,547	8.02%	Wednesday 16 August	1,032	7.39%	Wednesday 8 November	1,219	7.96%
Thursday 19 January	1,862	9.66%	Thursday 17 August	1,139	8.15%	Thursday 9 November	1,619	10.57%
Friday 20 January	1,760	9.13%	Friday 18 August	1,009	7.22%	Friday 10 November	1,176	7.68%
Saturday 21 January	1,246	6.46%	Saturday 19 August	1,076	7.70%	Saturday 11 November	1,390	9.08%
Week 1 total	8,865	45.98%	Week 1 total	6,635	47.49%	Week 1 total	5,404	35.28%
Monday 23 January	1,845	9.57%	Monday 21 August	1,129	8.08%	Monday 13 November	1,608	10.50%
Tuesday 24 January	1,867	9.68%	Tuesday 22 August	973	6.96%	Tuesday 14 November	1,555	10.15%
Wednesday 25 January	2,447	12.69%	Wednesday 23 August	1,212	8.68%	Wednesday 15 November	1,680	10.97%
Thursday 26 January	1,414	7.33%	Thursday 24 August	1,731	12.39%	Thursday 16 November	2,183	14.25%
Friday 27 January	2,844	14.75%	Friday 25 August	2,290	16.39%	Friday 17 November	2,886	18.84%
Week 2 total	10,417	54.02%	Week 2 total	7,335	52.51%	Week 2 total	9,912	64.72%
Overall and as a proportion of total votes counted	19,282	48.60%	Overall and as a proportion of total votes counted	13,970	33.96%	Overall and as a proportion of total votes counted	15,316	40.12%

Table 7: Early voting period data comparing the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election, 2023 Warrandyte District by-election and the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

In comparison, the proportion of early voting electors marked off the roll during the second week of early voting at the Narracan supplementary election and the Warrandyte by-election mirrored, at a slightly reduced rate, the pattern observed at the State overall, at 54.02% and 52.51% respectively.

There is a general trend of early voting peaking on the last 2 days of the early voting period. This was observed at the 2022 State election, in both the Warrandyte and Mulgrave Districts by-elections and the Narracan supplementary election (to a lesser degree).

At the 2023 Warrandyte by-election 28.78% of total mark-offs during the early voting period were recorded on the two days prior to the election, similar to the 2022 State election (28.46%) and far greater than at the Narracan supplementary election (22.08%). In comparison nearly a third (33.10%) of mark-offs during the same voting period at the 2023 Mulgrave by-election were made on these final days.

Finding 3: Electors made greater use of the extended voting hours on each of the two Thursdays of the early voting period week at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election compared with the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election, the 2022 State election and the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election.

On the first Thursday of early voting in Mulgrave, 271 electors (or 16.74% of the total for the day) were marked off the roll between 6 and 8 pm on that day increasing to 509 (or 23.32% of the day's total) on the last Thursday. A lower rate of mark-offs was recorded during the extended voting hours at the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election, at 160 (14.05% of the day's total) and 279 (16.12%) for each respective Thursday.

At the 2022 State election the VEC provided 3 days of extended voting hours (6pm–8pm) during the early voting period – Tuesday 15 November, Thursday 17 November and Thursday 24 November. On each of these days 11.15%, 12.03% and 18.63% of total mark-offs recorded for the day were made during the extended voting hours. Similarly, at the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election, which also had 3 days of extended voting hours, 7.98%, 8.16% and 12.59% of total mark-offs for each were recorded during the extended voting hours.

On average, a greater proportion of electors made use of the extended voting hours during the early voting period at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election than the overall rate recorded at the 2022 State election, the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election and the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election.

Evaluation of the trial recommends:

- › Early voting period to commence from the Wednesday following close of nominations. If Wednesday is a public holiday, the early voting period to commence on the Thursday following the close of nominations.
- › Maintaining the extended hours of operation across a shortened early voting period referred to above.

VEC Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election

Recommendation 1: The Electoral Act

The Electoral Act is over 20 years old and contains provisions that have not kept pace with shifts in Victoria's electoral landscape, including population growth and changes to election campaigning and procedures.

The VEC recommends that a holistic review of the Electoral Act is undertaken, to address the unsustainability of the election timeline and respond to the complexities of the modern electoral landscape.

Election timeline

The prescribed timelines for State elections are no longer sustainable for an electoral landscape growing in complexity and scale. As enrolment grows in Victoria and the State's elections become increasingly complex, the absence of any contingency in many parts of the legislated timeline means the risk of an election failure event is now real. Victoria's election timeline from issue of the writ to its return is the shortest in Australia, despite the State having the second highest overall population and the highest metropolitan population.

Certain prescribed timelines create specific pressure points in the broader election timeline that pose a risk to the successful delivery of elections. There are also some requirements in the Electoral Act which generate operational pressure and exacerbate the risks caused by short timeframes. Acknowledging that a comprehensive review may take time, recommendations to alleviate immediate risks to the successful delivery of future elections at specific points in the timeline have been provided here. However, they are no substitute for comprehensive reform of Victoria's State election timeline to ensure sustainable elections from 2026 and beyond.

Printing ballot papers in time to commence early voting

2022 State election observations

The short timeframes between close of nominations, ballot draws and commencing early voting — 67 hours at best — increases the challenge of delivering sufficient ballot papers to meet the demand of electors.

In particular, distant districts require significant print runs to have been completed before deliveries commence, meaning ballot paper deliveries cannot begin until less than 24 hours prior to the opening of early voting.

Electors expect more convenient access to early voting centres and a larger choice of early voting centres.

Accordingly, the need to print and distribute those ballot papers has increased while the timeframe to do so remains the same.

This challenge is compounded for new early voting centres where there is no historical data showing early voting demand. Longer period of time between the final nomination day and commencement of early voting would reduce the strain on the VEC's printing and delivery activities to better guarantee every early voting centre has the ballot paper supply it needs to open on time.

Additional time in the timeline for printing would reduce unnecessary pressure at the beginning of early voting. It would also reduce requirements for further top-ups, which increase administrative and logistic costs. Without changes to the timeline, the VEC will be less able to respond to voter demand for more early voting centres and would need to look at decreasing the services available from the beginning of the early voting period to reduce the risks of not being able to adequately provide early voting centres with sufficient ballot paper stock in time.

Mulgrave District by-election observations

The shorter early voting period trial eased the pressure in the election timeline to print and deliver sufficient ballot papers for the commencement of the early voting period. In addition, it confirmed that having fewer days of voting did not impact the number of votes cast in person during the early voting period in any significant way. Electors also appear to have made greater use of the extended voting hours provided.

Deployment of this initiative does not fully resolve the pressure at this point in the election timeline. The specific recommendation made in the 2022 State Election report to parliament reproduced below regarding printing ballot papers in time to commence early voting remains relevant.

Recommendation

The VEC recommends that section 63(5)(a) and 69(2) of the Electoral Act are amended to harmonise the final nomination day of all nominations in a general election to occur 9 days after the expiration of the Legislative Assembly, which would provide one additional business day for the printing and distribution of ballot material in readiness for early voting.

3.2 Management of Occupational Health and Safety Risks

The VEC further tested the expansion of early voting centres operational commitment in relation to the increase in the OHS risk profile associated with supporting the rise in Victorians voting early and difficulty sourcing suitable sites.

The Mulgrave District by-election early voting period was supported by the establishment of an increased footprint of two early voting centres. In accordance with standard practice each leased site underwent an assessment to determine the accessibility, OHS profile and ability for the VEC to operationalise the sites. The assessment covers the leased site only. Current practice ensures such an inspection takes place as early as possible in the preparation for an event, but often the timing is affected by market availability.

In the course of the early voting period, a number of concerns were raised by electors, campaigners and staff in relation to the broader surrounds of the leased site at Noble Park North Early Voting Centre (245-255 Browns Road, Noble Park North 3174). These concerns related to how electors were crossing the major arterial road adjacent to the leased site, the movement of vehicles within the carpark surrounding the leased site and near the entrance to the leased site where voters were entering for the purpose of voting, due to the positioning of campaigners.

In response to the concerns raised, the VEC promptly managed the risk of harm to electoral participants attending the site by implementing a number of treatments and controls, within 24 hours of the concerns first being raised. These included:

- › deployment of the VEC Electoral Compliance team onsite to triage and respond to the concerns of electoral participants
- › the erection of bollards to both separate and protect campaigners from straying into the way of traffic within the carpark while providing campaign material to electors
- › deployment of a Traffic Management team to manage the movement of vehicles within the carpark
- › deployment of a second Traffic Management team to manage electors attempting to cross the road to access to the leased site for the purpose of voting.

The implementation of these measures was communicated to Registered Political Parties (RPPs) and Candidates prior to their deployment. While these measures were reactive, their implementation directly addressed and remedied the concerns held by electoral participants.

In future the VEC commits to broaden site assessments, to extend beyond the leased site to the surrounding environment to ensure the safety of all electoral participants. This will result in some sites commencing operations with pre-established restrictions to appropriately manage OHS risks.

The VEC is working through how this can be best communicated to electoral participants. In the first instance the VEC will rely on the established communication channels to RPPs, candidates and electors so as to manage expectations early.

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
<p>The VEC will increase the number of early voting centres at future elections to respond to the increasing demand amongst Victorian voters to vote early.</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>Mulgrave District had one early voting centre for the 2022 State election and two for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC commits to ensuring the OHS risk profile of the site and its surrounds is understood and treatments and controls are appropriately deployed.</p> <p>The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>

3.3 Evaluating the election

Currently, the VEC conducts an independent evaluation at each State election. The evaluation assesses the quality of and engagement with VEC voting services amongst voters, candidates and registered political parties. No such independent evaluation is conducted for by-elections.

4. Venues and resourcing

Venues:

- 9 Election day voting centres
- 1 Early voting centre-election office
- 1 Early voting-election day voting centre

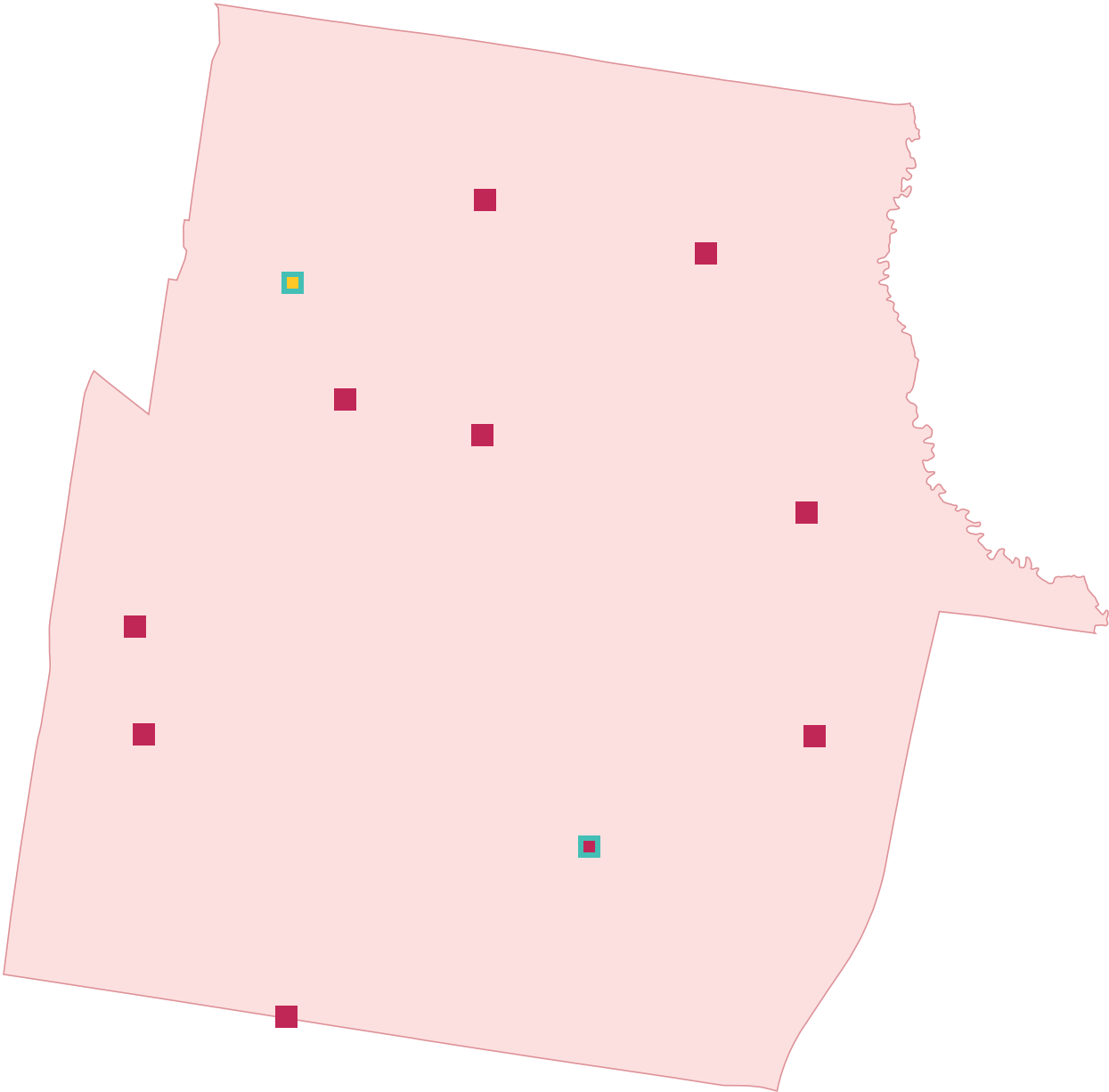


Figure 4: Map of election venues at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

4.1 Centralised Activity Site

The VEC established a Centralised Activity Site (CAS) at the VEC head office located at Level 4, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000. This site housed the Centralised Computer Count Centre, Centralised Processing Centre, Telephone Assisted Voting Centre, Postal Vote Applications, and counting activities.

4.2 Election office and early voting centres

To support the delivery of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election for by-election, the VEC leased a commercial property for the election office. There were no community venues used as early voting centres.

The early voting centres provided for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election had better wheelchair accessibility compared to those available in Mulgrave District for the 2022 State election.

Early voting centre accessibility	Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
Independent Wheelchair Accessible (IWA)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)
Assisted Wheelchair Accessible (AWA)	0	0
Limited or No Wheelchair Accessibility (LNWA)	0	0

Table 8: Early voting centre accessibility (% of total early voting centres) in 2023 and 2022

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment

The VEC will increase the number of early voting centres at future elections to respond to the increasing demand amongst Victorian voters to vote early.

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

4.3 Election day voting centres

After a review of the votes taken at Mulgrave District voting centres for the 2022 State election, the number of election day voting centres for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was reduced from 20 to 10. This change considered the increase in early and postal voting observed at the State election, and the decrease in overall time requirements in voting centres to conduct only a Legislative Assembly election.

The election day voting centres provided for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election had better wheelchair accessibility compared to those available in Mulgrave District for the 2022 State election.

Voting centre accessibility	Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
Independent Wheelchair Accessible (IWA)	6 (30%)	5 (50%)
Assisted Wheelchair Accessible (AWA)	10 (50%)	5 (50%)
Limited or No Wheelchair Accessibility (LNWA)	4 (20%)	0 (0%)

Table 9: Election day voting centres accessibility (% of total voting centres) in 2023 and 2022

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment

The VEC intends to consolidate the number of election day voting centres to be able to more efficiently allocate resources to early voting.

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

4.4 Staffing the election

The management of recruitment campaigns, preparation of work instructions, induction and training of appointees, provision of appointment support, and the health and safety of the VEC's workforce requires significant planning, coordination, monitoring and ongoing evaluation.

The VEC appointed 172 people to work in temporary election workforce roles during the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election: 90 election casuals and 82 election officials. This workforce undertakes a variety of short-term roles, ranging from single day appointments to more substantial work over several months. The VEC operates two distinct pools of people registered to work in election roles: the Senior Election Official pool, and the election casual pool. Senior Election Officials go through a rigorous recruitment process, as opposed to the tailored and streamlined process for people wishing to join the election casual pool. As noted above, following the significant investment the VEC undertook to grow its staffing database for the 2022 State election, the VEC was able to re-engage a significant portion of the staffing profile of Mulgrave District from the 2022 State election for the purpose of the by-election. Accordingly, it was unnecessary to utilise labour hire agencies or Victorian Public Service secondments to further complement the staffing requirements for the event.

Election management teams

Two senior election officials were appointed to the roles of election manager and assistant election manager for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. Both had been election managers for the 2022 State election. The election manager for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was Bill Irvine.

An experienced senior election official was appointed to the position of election support officer, who had also been an election support officer during the 2022 State election.

The election casual pool

The VEC sent a survey to election casual staff who had worked in Mulgrave District during the 2022 State election, to gauge their interest and availability for work during the by-election. The election manager was able to use this list, along with the election casual pool and a list of people who had explicitly expressed interest in working at the by-election, to identify and appoint suitable staff.

Training and instruction manuals

Election management team training

The election manager and assistant election manager completed the blended training program in preparation for the 2022 State election, so no further formal training was required given the proximity between the State election and the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. The 2022 State election self-paced eLearn modules remained available to them, accessed via the VEC's Learning Management System (LMS), and both received a briefing on State by-election specific procedures from the Election Support Officer.

The election manager and assistant election manager were provided with a comprehensive State by-election manual that set out their responsibilities and processes involved, as well as a State by-election supplement summarising the key differences to the 2022 State election. Additional tailored State by-election guides, setting out work instructions for discrete procedures that may be delegated to other staff, were also provided. The election manager and assistant election manager were required to be familiar with the content of work instructions used by all staff who reported to them, to enable them to direct and support staff as required.

The election manager was also provided with an Election Diary clearly setting out the timeline for key tasks and activities.

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment

The VEC will increase the focus in election management training on common areas of difficulty for election managers, including managing conflict and maintaining oversight over a greater number of tasks.

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

Election casual and election official training

All election staff were required to complete training for their roles. The VEC's LMS was used to deliver the online training, with the content tailored to suit the requirements of each role for a State by-election. The completion rate was 100%.

Additional face-to-face training was tailored and provided for more complex roles, including early voting centre managers, assistant early voting centre managers, voting centre managers, assistant voting centre managers, and election liaison officers.

The VEC provided written State by-election manuals with detailed work instructions for each of the roles specified above.

Election staff support services

Election manager support

The election manager was supported by:

- > an experienced election support officer who assisted the election manager with procedural and operational issues. The election support officer was located within the election office on selected days during the election. The Election support officer also monitored the completion of tasks by the election manager and undertook compliance checks. These checks were designed to ensure the VEC could have confidence the election was being conducted according to procedures.
- > the election office Help Desk. The role of the Help Desk was to log the content of support requests and forward them to the appropriate VEC team for response. The Help Desk also provided direct support in resolving a range of IT system issues.

The election support officer was supported by:

- > the VEC lead responsible for election staff management.
- > the VEC's regulatory advice and incidents desk. This service was available to provide advice in relation to any legislative or regulatory queries from the election office. It also reviewed any escalated matters that may constitute a breach of electoral law and determined what, if any, action was required by the VEC.

Appointment support service: Personnel Helpline

The VEC's Personnel Helpline service was available for staff who had questions about their appointments, work requirements and online training.

Pre-employment screening

Measures to ensure impartiality

The VEC adopts several integrity measures to ensure staff are politically impartial and suitable for work in elections. Section 17A of the Electoral Act allows the VEC to discriminate against a person in relation to offering appointment on the basis of political membership or activity, and this discrimination is lawful under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*.

The VEC requires all prospective appointees and employees to disclose any political memberships and activities that could compromise the VEC's perceived independence. Potential staff are required to complete an online Disclosure of Political Activities questionnaire at the time they are offered an appointment.

Measures to ensure appointment suitability and security

All senior election officials appointed to election management roles were required to undergo both a National Police Records Check and a Working with Children Check.

The VEC notes that the global security environment for elections is intensifying, and election events for major national, state and provincial economies are becoming more likely targets for foreign interference.

The VEC continues to assess its head office and field staff workforce to identify individuals and roles that may be exposed to higher levels risk from foreign interference and targeted credential theft in line with advice provided by Australia's Electoral Integrity and Assurance Taskforce and National Counter Foreign Interference Coordination Centre.

**Report to Parliament
on the 2022 Victorian
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Operational Commitment**

**2023 Mulgrave District
by-election**

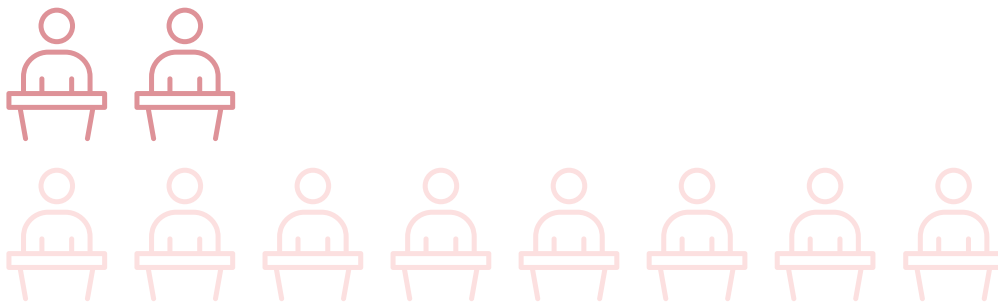
The VEC intends to expand National Police Records Checks and Working with Children Checks to additional election roles at future election events.

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

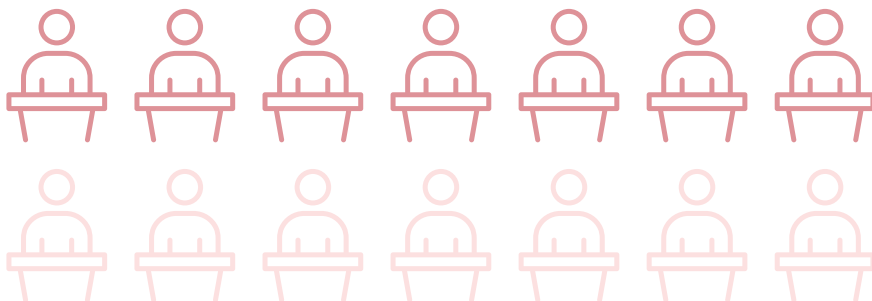
The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

5. Candidates and parties

2023 Mulgrave District by-election



2022 Mulgrave District general election



Number of candidates

- Independent candidate
- Registered political party candidate

Figure 5: Number and type of candidates comparing 2023 Mulgrave District by-election and 2022 Mulgrave District general election

5.1 Engagement and support

The VEC offered tailored information sessions for registered political parties and independent candidates. Both sessions covered key aspects of the candidate processes, such as the nomination process, how-to-vote card registration and funding and disclosure obligations.

The independent session was held online via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 25 October at 6 pm. A total of 2 prospective candidates attended. The session for registered political parties was open to registered officers and deputy registered officers and was also held online via Microsoft teams on Wednesday 25 October at 10:30 am, with a total of 8 in attendance.

Registered political parties had access to a dedicated candidate helpdesk for guidance on lodging nominations, applying to register HTVCs and other enquiries during the election. They also received periodic bulletins with updates on the conduct of the election.

From the opening of the election office, the central point of contact for independent candidates with the VEC was through the election manager where they could seek support and updates on the election process. The election manager sent candidate bulletins containing updates to all candidates to ensure the provision of timely messages on voting and counting.

Handbooks

The VEC published candidate and scrutineer handbooks and all necessary forms on its website, including information about the election timeline, legal requirements, and key election processes.

These handbooks, along with all relevant forms, were also available to registered political parties and candidates in candidate information kits via the election office. Scrutineer handbooks were also available for scrutineers at all counting locations.

5.2 Nominations

Nominations for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election opened on Tuesday 24 October 2023 and closed at 12 noon on Thursday 2 November 2023. Registered political parties were required to lodge a nomination for their endorsed candidate at least one day earlier than the final nomination day, by 12 noon on Wednesday 1 November 2023.

The VEC received 10 nominations for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. 8 nominations were from candidates endorsed by registered political parties and 2 candidates stood for election as independent candidates.

Candidate type	Narracan	Warrandyte	Mulgrave
Independent candidates	3	5	2
Party candidates	8	7	8

Table 10: Number of candidates at each District supplementary and by-election since 2023 endorsed by registered political parties compared to independent candidates

Endorsed candidate	Registered political party
KING, Ethelyn	Libertarian
ACKERLY, Celeste	Sustainable Australia Party – Stop Overdevelopment / Corruption
COOK, Ian	-
FOREMAN, Jane	Family First Victoria
MANN, Courtney	Liberal
CVETKOVA, Kelly	Victorian Socialists
GARAD, Rhonda	Australian Greens
FOSTER, Eden	Australian Labor Party
THEODOSSOPOULOU, Tina	-
CURRIE, Bronwyn	Animal Justice Party

Table 11: Table of candidates for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election in ballot paper order

Candidate nomination deposits

Nomination deposits were refunded for 4 candidates because the candidate was either elected and/or they had obtained more than 4% of the first-preference votes in the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. The deposits of the other 6 candidates were forfeited because they were not elected and had obtained less than 4% of the first-preference votes in the by-election.

5.3 How-to-vote card registration

Applications to register how-to-vote cards (HTVCs) opened on Friday 3 November 2023 and closed at 12 noon on Friday 10 November 2023.

The VEC received 20 applications to register HTVCs. Of these applications, 3 were refused registration for failing to comply with the HTVC requirements and 17 were approved for registration. The applicants whose HTVC application were refused submitted subsequent applications, all of which were approved for registration.

	2023 Narracan District supplementary election	2023 Warrandyte District by-election	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
Registered HTVCs	11	14	17
Rejected HTVCs	5	1	3
Total	16	15	20

Table 12: Number of how-to-vote cards that were registered and rejected in by-elections and supplementary elections since 2023

5.4 Provision of electoral roll to candidates

Under the Electoral Act, the VEC is required to provide information about electors on the electoral roll at the request of registered political parties and candidates in an election. This list is provided as encrypted data and excludes the particulars of silent electors. It does not contain the email addresses or phone numbers of electors.

The Electoral Act prescribes severe penalties for any misuse of electoral information provided. During the pre-election briefings offered to registered political parties and independent candidates, the VEC sought to reinforce and remind recipients of electoral roll products about their obligations in respect to the information.

5.5 Funding and disclosure

Overview

The VEC administers 3 funding streams, 2 of which are relevant to the Mulgrave by-election: public funding and administrative expenditure funding.

Public funding

Public funding is available to independent and endorsed candidates who receive at least 4% of the first preference votes (or are elected) in an election. While parties and candidates that receive public funding at a general election may request to receive an equal amount paid in advance instalments in relation to the next general election, this is not an option available for a by-election. Parties and candidates have up to 20 weeks from the date of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election to submit their statement of expenditure and the VEC pays the entitlement within 30 days of receiving properly completed documentation. A summary of public funding amounts paid to registered political parties and independent candidates at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election is provided in **Appendix 3**.

As at 10 April 2024, all 4 eligible parties and candidates had submitted a statement of expenditure to receive public funding following the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. The VEC paid 3 out of 4 of the entitlements in full. The entitlement amount is the lower of \$7.01 per first preference vote received (for the financial year 2023-24), or the amount of political and electoral expenditure incurred, per the statement of expenditure.

Administrative expenditure funding

Elected members are eligible to receive administrative expenditure funding, which is paid quarterly in advance. The successful candidate in the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was an endorsed member of the same registered political party as the previous elected member.

Disclosure of political donations

The VEC has published on its website 30 donations made by 29 donors to 4 recipients during the period 26 September 2023 to 30 November 2023. The total value of these donations is \$104,484.06.

6. Communication and engagement

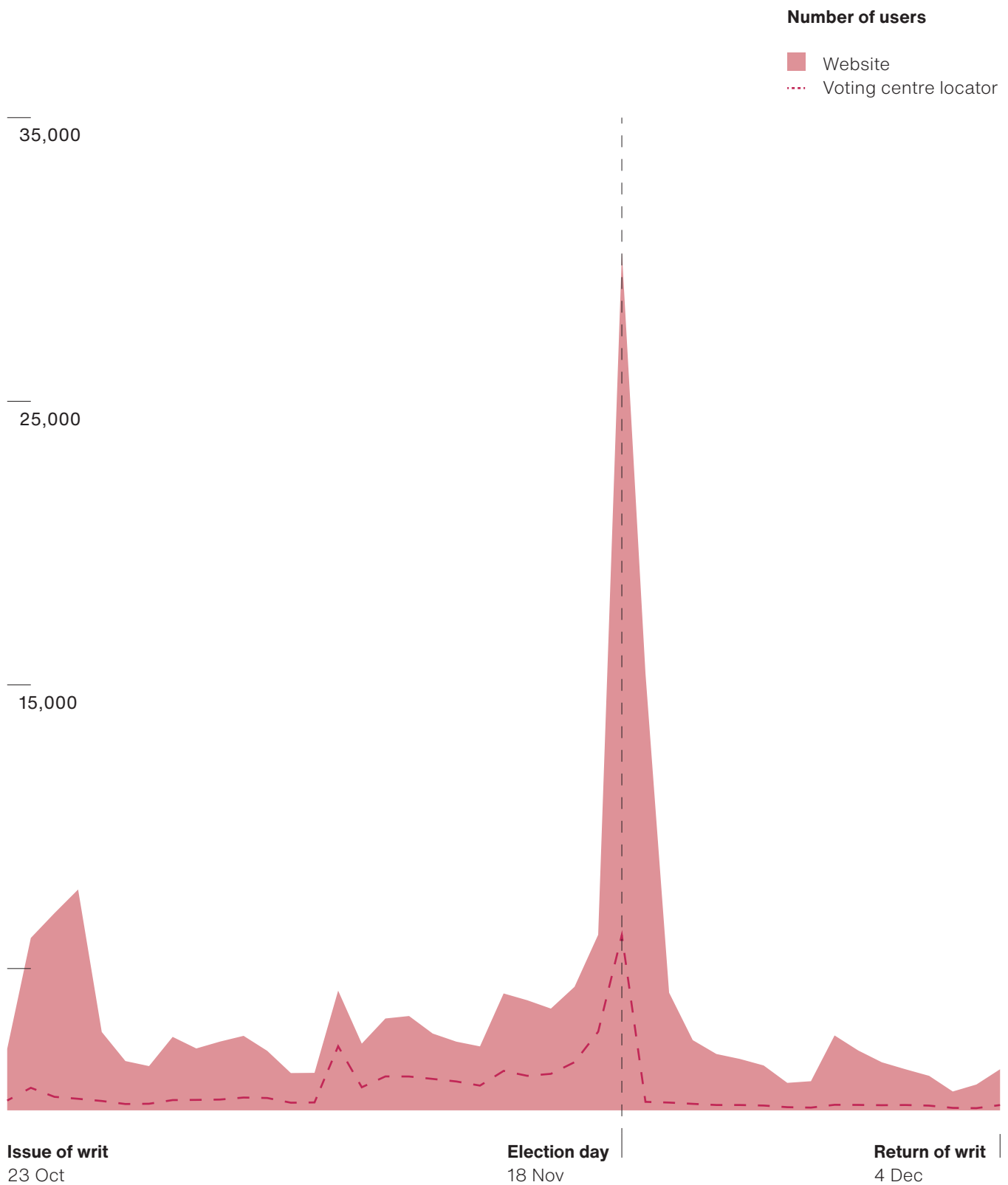


Figure 6: Number of users of the VEC website and Voting Centre Locator between issue of writ and return of writ for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

Web traffic

Webpage	Total views	Total users
Voting centre locator	58,406	27,492
Mulgrave District by-election landing page	65,473	34,485
Postal voting	6,042	3,473
Find candidates	8,174	5,729
Voting options	13,231	7,192
Away during the election	3,627	2,192
How-to-vote cards	1,192	832
District results	78,185	31,482
Vote by phone	548	358

Table 13: Website traffic during the election period for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

VoterAlert

Phase	Total voters	SMS	Email	Total messages
Close of roll	23,982	22,848	15,593	38,441
EasyVote guide	23,768	22,644	15,435	38,079
Election day	14,659	13,991	9,348	23,339

Table 14: VoterAlert messages sent during the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

6.1 Advertising campaign

The VEC ran a comprehensive communication program to raise awareness of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, starting in October 2023 when the writ was issued for the by-election. This included:

- > a media release on Monday 23 October 2023 announcing the date of the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election as Saturday 18 November 2023
- > electors receiving VoterAlert SMS and email notifications in the Mulgrave District such as: 38,441 reminders with an enrolment message prior to the close of roll, 38,079 messages with the digital EasyVote guide at the commencement of early voting, and 23,339 reminders on election day (excluding those already marked off the roll as having voted)
- > comprehensive information on the VEC website, including information about early voting, election day voting, postal voting, telephone assisted voting, nominating as a candidate, what to do if you're away, and an interactive map with the addresses, opening hours and accessibility information of early voting centres and election day voting centres
- > print advertisements in the Herald Sun and The Age, broadcast ads on metropolitan radio stations and sponsored social media ads geo-targeted to all postcodes in Mulgrave District
- > a series of media releases and organic social media reminders on the VEC's own channels.

The VEC also worked closely with media to respond to queries during the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election period.

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2023 Mulgrave District by-election

The VEC will conduct a website content review to ensure that all website content is up-to-date and accurate, remains accessible, and meets the needs of its audiences.

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

The VEC will maintain its focus on the enrolment phase of its election advertising on the close-of-roll date, so that the number of electors enrolling 'on the day' is manageable at voting centres, and to reduce the number of rejected provisional votes.

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

6.2 Public enquiry service

The VEC's Public Enquiry Service (PES) operated between 23 October 2023 to 24 November 2023, catering for a high volume of enquiries from the public. Operating hours for the PES were 9am to 5pm on weekdays (8pm on close of rolls day), with hours extending during the nine days of early voting to support queries on weekdays and election day.

The PES was part of the CAS set up at VEC head office to ensure high quality, accurate and appropriate responses were provided, to provide escalation for complex enquiries, and to handle sensitive and silent elector enquires.

The service took a total of 1,066 calls and 150 emailed enquiries.

The most common queries for both the calls and emails were related to postal voting, questions regarding boundaries, and electors expressing an inability to vote.

7. Voting period

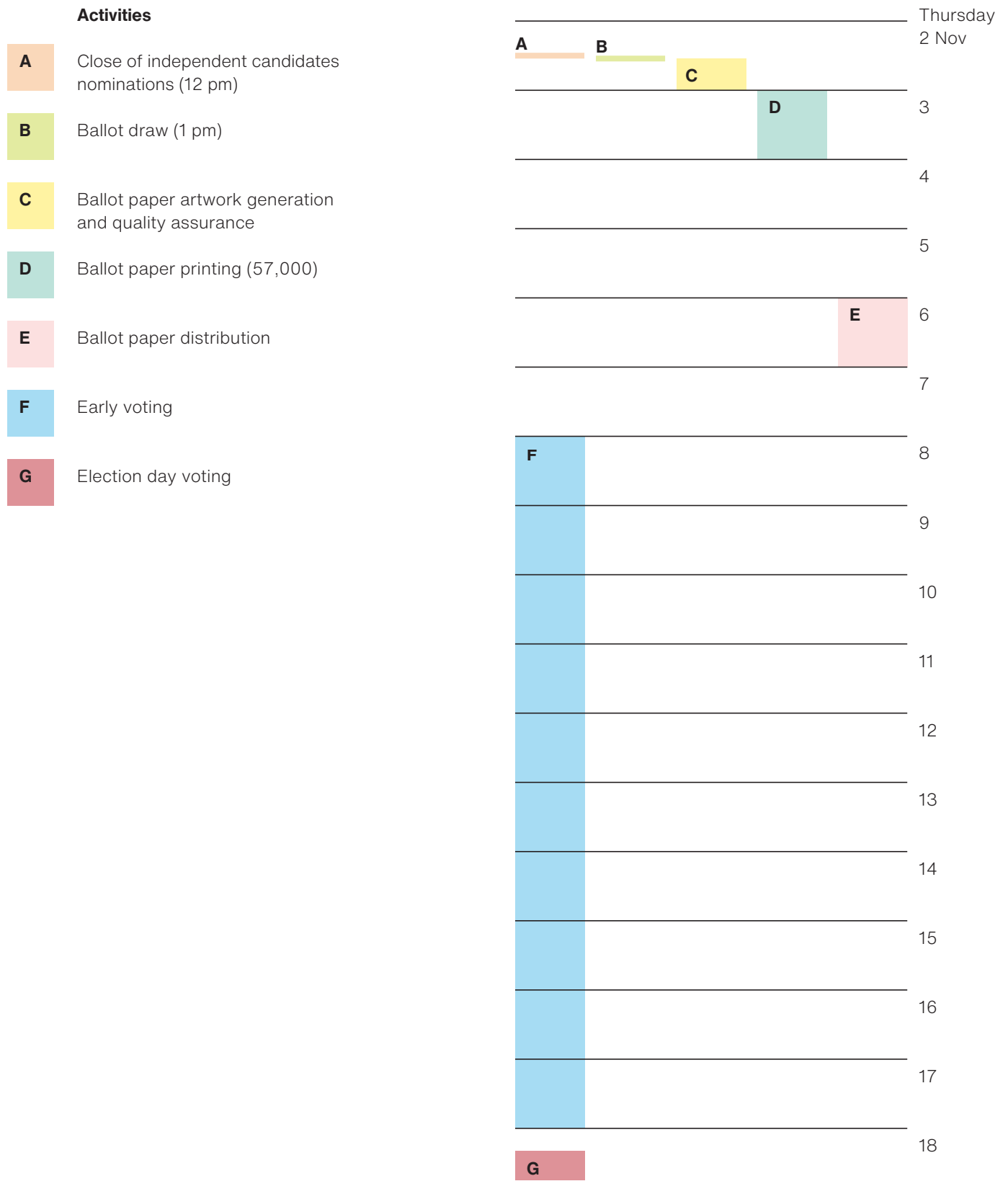


Figure 7: Timeline of ballot paper production and voting period from close of nominations on Thursday 2 November 2023 to election day on Saturday 18 November 2023

7.1 Ballot paper preparation

Once the ballot draw was completed after the close of nominations 2 November 2023 the VEC completed artwork creation and quality assurance processes for ballot papers, in the same manner as conducted during a general election, to prepare for printing. 57,000 ballot papers were produced in total for attendance and postal voting methods.

These volumes were conceived based on estimations for a stand-alone event with no out-of-district voting requirements taking also into consideration the actual ballot paper usage at the 2022 State election.

Ballot papers required for the entire voting period were produced prior to the commencement of early voting and distributed to the election office the day prior to early voting opening.

To prevent ballot paper shortfalls across voting centres, and after being successfully trialled at the Narracan District supplementary election, the VEC extended electronic roll mark-off from only early voting centres to all election day voting centres. This is in contrast to the ordinary system used at general elections of paper roll mark-offs, which cannot be monitored independent of staff reports. This allowed consumption of ballot papers at an election day voting centre level to be monitored in real time and reduced the dependency on election day voting centre managers to notify their election manager or election liaison officer of their site's ballot paper consumption rates.

7.2 Voting channels

In the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, electors had multiple channels to cast their votes. These were:

- › attendance voting, including:
 - early attendance voting
 - election day voting
- › postal voting, including overseas and interstate electors
- › telephone assisted voting

7.3 Attendance voting

Early voting

Early voting in person was available at 2 early voting centres (located at 2 physical locations) within the Mulgrave District. These early voting centres were open for 9 days, from 9 am on Wednesday 8 November until 6 pm on Friday 17 November 2023. In addition, they were open for extended hours from 8:30 am to 8 pm on Thursday 9 November and Thursday 16 November 2023, and from 9 am to 5 pm on Saturday 11 November 2023 to meet the needs of electors outside of ordinary business hours.

Interstate voting

Interstate electors could apply for a postal vote.

Mobile voting

Five venues had mobile voting and 496 votes were counted through this method. Five other venues requested postal vote applications.

7.4 Postal voting

Electors had until 6pm on Wednesday 15 November 2023 to apply for a postal vote. Electors could apply for a postal vote by:

- › completing an application online via the VEC website
- › collecting a postal vote application form from Australia Post locations within the Mulgrave District
- › collecting an application from the election office
- › calling the VEC's Public Enquiry Service to request an application form be posted to them.

Some applications arrived by mail after the deadline and could not be processed. The VEC called these electors to advise them of alternative voting options, namely early voting or election day voting.

All postal vote applications were processed centrally for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. Over 97.76% (3,276) were completed online and once submitted by the elector were immediately available in the Election Management System (EMS) Applications received by mail were scanned and uploaded into the EMS. Most applications were processed electronically, which eliminated labour-intensive handling of paper applications and ensured the efficient delivery of ballot packs. Paper applications that could not be scanned were processed manually. The EMS enabled election

officials to track all applications and inform electors of the status of their application at any time. Electors who applied online were also emailed a tracking number so they could track the progress of their applications on the VEC website.

Applications received prior to the close of roll were cleared within two working days of the electoral roll being available. The VEC processed all further applications on the day they were received.

A very small number of electors who applied for a postal vote also voted at an early voting centre prior to receiving their ballot pack. The use of electronic roll mark-off at all early voting centres enabled the election officials to identify electors who had been issued with, but had not yet returned, a postal vote, and to cancel the postal vote. If the postal vote was subsequently returned, it was marked as rejected by the system and not counted.

Australia Post is an important partner in the postal voting system. For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, the VEC used the Express Post network for delivery of election material in the week prior to election day. This helped ensure that material was delivered in sufficient time for electors to complete and return their ballot material.

From the Monday prior to election day, an elector's declaration could be quickly checked against either the elector's signature on the scanned image of the postal vote application or the verification question and answer on the online application. As a result, all postal votes received by the VEC by the close of voting that could be included in the count were counted on election night.

The VEC again established an email ballot material service for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. This facility was only available to electors in remote areas or located interstate or overseas that would therefore have trouble accessing timely postal facilities. Electors could provide an email address for receipt of ballot material. The VEC processed each application, with the system automatically generating an email to each elector. The email contained a secure link to all ballot material required to vote. To access the ballot material file via the email link, each elector was required to enter verification information provided by them at the point of application.

A total of 87 emailed ballot packs were dispatched. While the emailed ballot pack provides a solution to decreasing postal services, it remains labour intensive for the voter and requires access to a printer. In its Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election, the VEC recommended enhanced access to telephone assisted voting for interstate and overseas voters in order to better serve enrolled Victorian electors regardless of their physical location.

General postal voters

Electors who satisfy certain statutory requirements regarding their inability to vote at a voting centre at election time are eligible for registration as a General Postal Voter (GPV). By registering as a GPV, electors automatically receive ballot papers in the mail for all State elections and local government elections. There were 1,741 GPVs (3.7% of enrolment) registered for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

7.5 Antarctic electors

An "Antarctic elector" is an elector who has made a request under the Electoral Act to be treated as such while stationed in the Australian Antarctic Territory. There were no electors based in the Australian Antarctic Territory at the time of the by-election.

7.6 Telephone assisted voting

In the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, the VEC again provided Telephone Assisted Voting (TAV) as an accessible voting option to eligible classes of electors without requiring them to vote in person at a voting centre or complete a postal vote. This was the fourth time the VEC operated TAV since the Electoral Act was updated prior to the 2018 State election to allow for the provision of electronic assisted voting. For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, the TAV service was available to electors who are blind or have low vision, and electors living with a motor impairment.

Voting using the TAV service involves 2 discrete call centres: the first to register eligible electors for the service, and the second to capture and record their vote on a physical ballot paper.

At no point during the second call is the elector asked to disclose their identity, which preserve the secrecy of each elector's vote. To provide further integrity to the service, an observer accompanies the operator for the second call to ensure the vote is cast per the elector's instructions.

The TAV service commenced voting from 9 am on Wednesday 8 November 2023 and operated through to 6 pm on election day. A total of 125 votes were counted through TAV, including 57 during the early voting period and 68 on election day. The VEC recorded a total of 131 registrations to use the service.

7.7 Voting trends

A total of 15,835 votes were counted from early voting centres. A further 17,787 ordinary votes were counted on election day and 4,249 postal votes were counted. A total of 163 declaration votes were admitted that required further scrutiny (either provisional or marked as voted), which resulted in 160 being counted and there were 125 votes counted using TAV for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

Vote type	Number counted for 2023 Mulgrave District by-election
Early voting centre votes	15,835
Telephone assisted voting (early)	57
Early votes (total)	15,892
Attendance votes	17,787
Telephone assisted voting (absent)	68
Election day votes (total)	17,855
Postal votes	4,249
Provisional votes	154
Marked-as-voting	6
Mobile voting	496
Total	38,652

Table 15: Votes by type at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

7.8 Voter turnout

Voter turnout for by-elections has seen a decline over the years where the average was 86.1% voter turnout 10 years ago. Voter turnout for Mulgrave District was 80.94%, which aligns with the turnout for the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election at 78.85% and the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election at 79.67%. It is important to note that this is not an isolated trend in Victoria but is happening in all Australian jurisdictions and is also evidenced in other comparable democracies. The reasons are multifaceted and complex.

There is no single cause to the decline in turnout, but rather a combination of factors, some of which relate specifically to the VEC's role. These include enrolment, engagement with identified groups, such as younger people, and voting options for those outside of Victoria during the election.

Election	Voter turnout	Previous State election turnout
2023 Narracan District supplementary election	78.85%	91.67% (2018) ³
2023 Warrandyte District by-election	79.67%	91.57% (2022)
2023 Mulgrave District by-election	80.94%	88.40% (2022)
Average	79.88%	90.55%

Table 16: Voter turnout in Victoria's last three by-elections compared to previous State elections

Turnout at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was lower than the 2022 State election turnout for the same district, from 91.57% of those enrolled to 79.67%. This drop was expected, as there is generally a lower rate of voter turnout at by-elections compared with general elections. In some cases, the difference is over 10 percentage points below the previous State election turnout for the same district, as can be seen in Table 16. The same pattern has been observed at federal elections⁴.

³ Based on Upper House ballot turnout in Narracan, as the Narracan district election failed due to the death of a candidate.

⁴ Barber, S. 2019 'House of Representatives by- elections: 1901-2018' https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1819/HoRByElections

Election	Voter turnout	Previous State election turnout
2013 Lyndhurst by-election	80.07%	92.47% (2010)
2015 Gippsland South by-election	87.06%	94.00% (2014)
2015 Polwarth by-election	86.18%	94.88% (2014)
2015 South-West Coast by-election	91.09%	94.93% (2014)
Average	86.10%	94.07%

Table 17: Turnout at Victorian by-elections compared to previous State elections

It is important to note that this is not an isolated trend in Victoria but is happening in all Australian jurisdictions and is also evidenced in other comparable democracies.

Factors identified in the research to explain the lower turnout at by-elections include the timing of the election, the political stakes involved, the political parties fielding candidates, voter or local familiarity with candidates, the issues contested, the reason for requiring a by-election and voter awareness of the election⁵. By-elections can also attract a significant proportion of protest votes (detailed in **Appendix 1: Informality review**).

The foremost factor cited for lower turnout at by-elections is not having candidates from all the major parties standing. The Australian Labor Party did not field a candidate at the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, which may have resulted in some voters not turning out to vote, though it is difficult to determine exactly how many of these voters there were.

Not having one of the major parties field a candidate infers another factor used to account for turnout at by-elections – the political stakes involved. As the major parties weigh the costs and benefits of fielding a candidate at a by-election, voters also likely assess the importance of their vote. As a result, they may be less likely to turnout to vote in by-elections where the political stakes are perceived as less important.

In most contexts, voter awareness of by-elections is assumed to be lower than for general elections. There is less interest in the media and across communities in the results of a by-elections than for the results of all state districts. Related factors, such as major parties not all fielding candidates or less at stake in the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

result, likely contribute to less coverage of by-elections in the media. There are some important exceptions to this assumption, such as if a by-election will decide government, if the previous MP was local well liked or had a high profile, or if there is a particularly prominent candidate standing. The VEC continues to advertise and promote participation in by-elections, as is detailed earlier in **Chapter 6.1 – Advertising campaign** this report.

Voter turnout by age group

It is possible to analyse voter turnout by age group using the records of those marked off the roll as having voted. This is called ‘mark off’ data and is the most appropriate and accurate way of measuring turnout by age group. The 2023 Mulgrave District by-election follows trends in turnout and age observed in similar election events. Turnout starts stronger with those aged 18–19, and then begins to drop between the ages of 20 and 35, before rising steadily from the 35–40 age ranges, and dropping again at the 70+ range.

Turnout by those marked as voted			
Age group	2023 Narracan District supplementary election	2023 Warrandyte District by-election	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
18–19	80.00%	82.97%	84.58%
20–24	67.78%	79.89%	79.00%
25–29	62.90%	69.04%	72.96%
30–34	67.21%	66.74%	74.18%
35–39	72.61%	76.08%	76.49%
40–44	75.91%	80.65%	79.50%
45–49	78.52%	82.38%	81.69%
50–54	80.27%	84.18%	84.08%
55–59	82.20%	84.77%	85.22%
60–64	85.99%	84.06%	86.30%
65–69	88.12%	83.49%	86.81%
70+	86.15%	82.48%	81.22%

Table 18: Voter turnout in Victoria's last three by- and supplementary elections by age

5 Middleton, A. 2023: 'Turnout, government performance and localism in contemporary by-elections', Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2023.2169446>

A similar 'S-curve' is present in the turnout by age group at both the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, 2023 Warrandyte District by-election and the 2023 Narracan District supplementary election (see Figure 8). This S trend is not unique to by-elections and has been regularly observed in successive Victorian State elections, as well as in other state, territory and federal divisions in Australia. Some research suggests this trend is not generational and may instead be reflective of a complex series of 'life course' factors⁶.

Turnout by age group in Victoria's last three by-elections

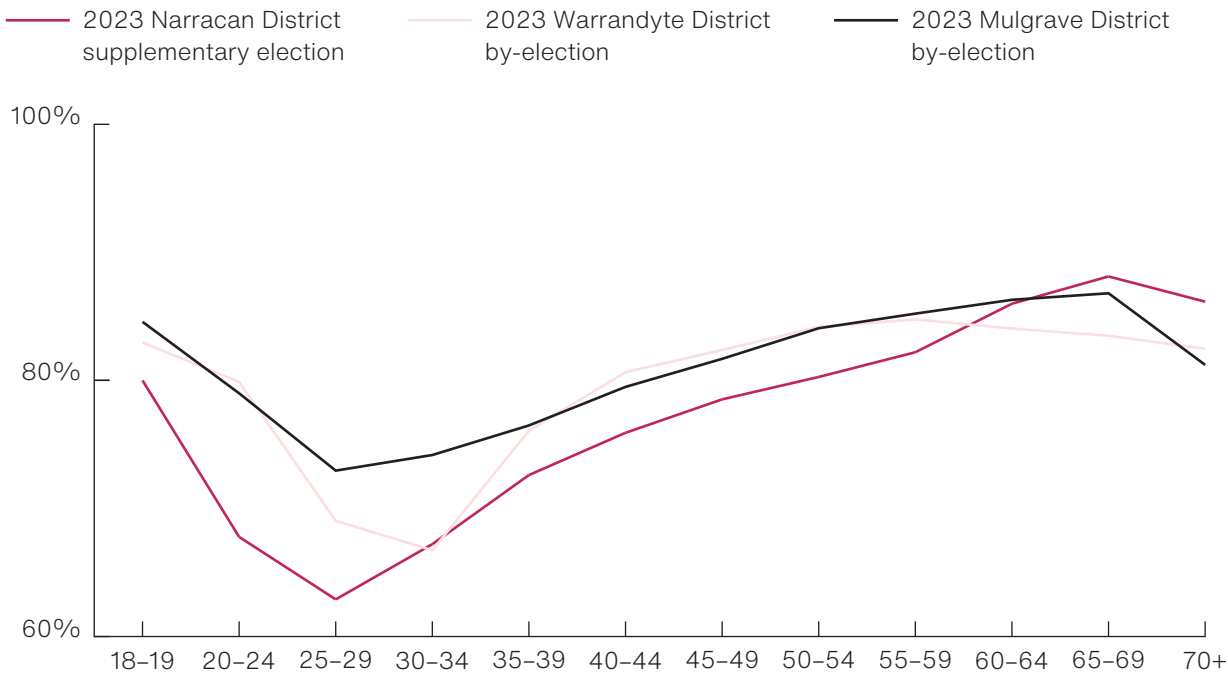


Figure 8: Comparison of turnout by age range at the 2023 Narracan supplementary election, the 2023 Warrandyte by-election and the 2023 Mulgrave by-election

Informality

The informality rate for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was 5.54%. This is lower than the 8.67% rate observed in Mulgrave at the 2022 State election. This may be explained by the small number of by-election candidates (10) as compared to the State election (14) for the Mulgrave District. A review of informal voting at the 2022 State election found informality is generally higher when there are more than 10 candidates on the ballot paper (Read more on the **VEC's research and publications website**). See **Appendix 1: Informality review** for more information.

6 Hannan-Morrow, S & Rodan, M. 2014: 'Gender, Age and Generational effects on Turnout in Australian Federal Elections', Australian Political Studies Association 2014 Conference - Sydney. https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/research/files/apsa-2014-gender-age-and-generational-effects-on-turnout-in-australian-federal-elections.pdf

8. Counting and results

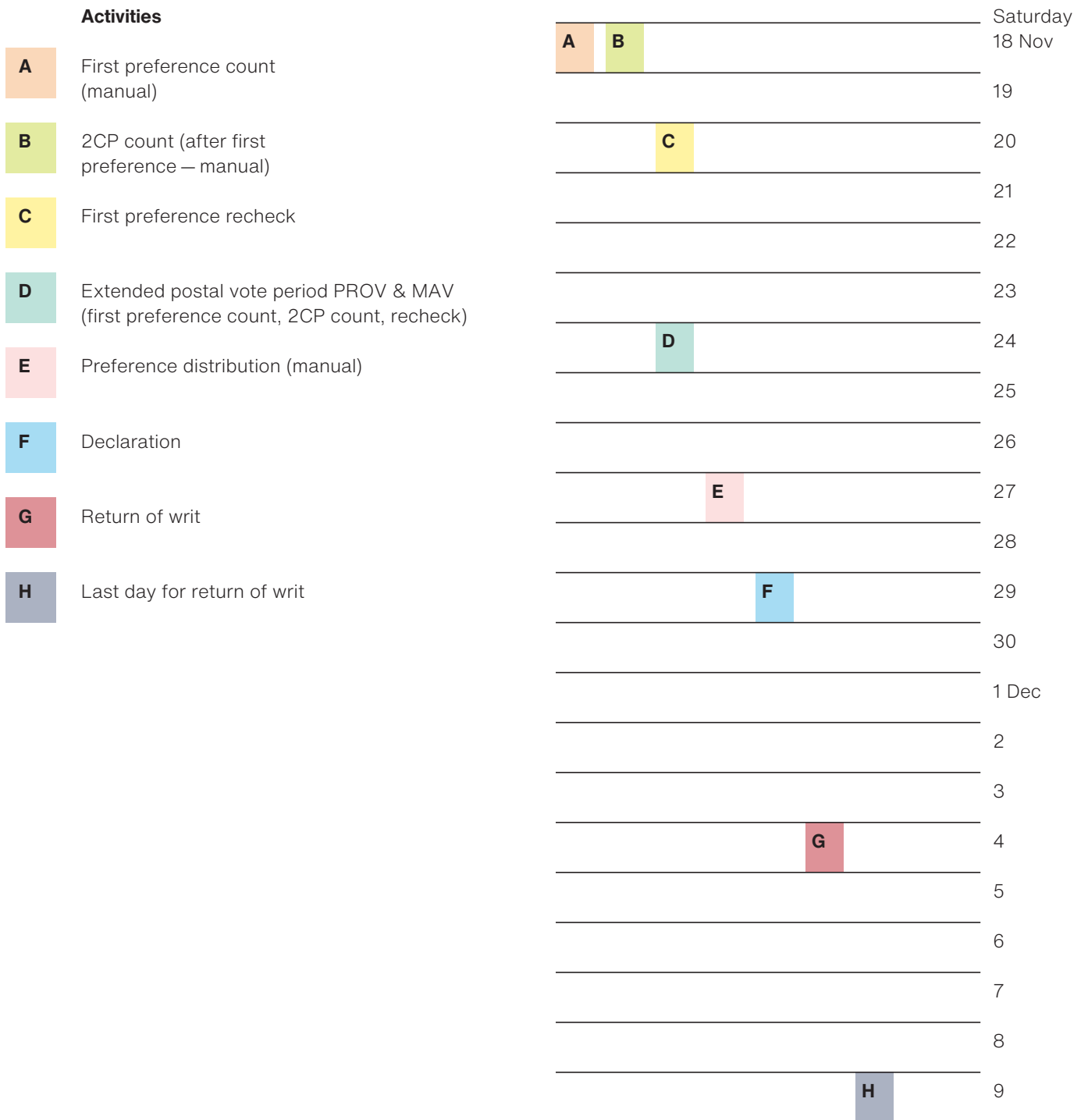


Figure 9: Timeline of counting activities from election night on 18 November 2023 to final day for writs to be returned on 9 December 2023

Counting of votes commenced at the close of voting at 6 pm on Saturday 18 November 2023, and continued until Wednesday 29 November 2023 when the final results were calculated and declared. There are different types of votes that are cast at an election. The type of vote and how it was cast affects when and where it will be counted.

The VEC's count plan is constructed to count ballot papers systematically, while also preserving critical information about each parcel of ballot papers as it tracks through the counting process progresses. This maintains accountability and ensures ballot paper parcels can be easily reconciled against earlier counting activity.

8.1 Vote types

Ordinary votes

Votes cast by electors at election day voting centres are referred to as ordinary votes, with the exception of provisional and marked-as-voted votes. All ordinary votes were counted at the voting centre where they were issued following the close of voting on election day.

Early votes

Votes cast by electors at an early voting centre or mobile voting site are referred to as early votes with the exception of provisional and marked-as-voted votes. Votes cast at early voting centres were counted after the close of voting at the election office.

Postal votes

All postal votes mailed back to the VEC were received, processed and counted at the CAS. Postal votes returned and verified before election day were counted at the CAS after the close of voting on election day. Votes that arrived at the CAS after election day, including those delivered to voting centres on election day and forwarded to the CAS, continued to be received, processed, verified and counted up until the statutory cut-off for returned postal votes to be admitted to the count at 6 pm on Wednesday 15 November 2023.

TAV votes

Votes cast through the TAV service throughout the early voting period and on election day were counted at the CAS.

Provisional votes

People who believe they should be on the electoral roll but cannot be found on the roll in an early voting centre or election day voting centre may choose to make a provisional vote.

A provisional vote requires the person to complete the necessary application form and secure their completed ballot papers in a declaration envelope. These were forwarded to the CAS after election day for processing, and the ballot papers in declarations that were eligible to be enrolled were able to be admitted for counting. Admitted provisional votes were counted at the CAS.

Marked-as-voted votes

Voters found to have already been marked on the roll when they attended to vote, but who claimed not to have voted, were issued with ballot papers that were then enclosed in a declaration envelope once completed. These votes were all forwarded to the CAS after election day for processing, where they were checked to determine whether they should be admitted to the count. Admitted marked-as-voted votes were counted at the CAS.

8.2 Counting

Election day counting

Counting of votes on election day commenced from 6 pm.

Early votes were counted at the election office, with ballot papers from the Noble Park North early voting centre transferred to the election office for counting in the larger premises. Ordinary votes were counted at the voting centre where they were issued.

In these voting centres, election officials conducted two counts of ordinary and early votes:

- › first preference count of ballot papers
- › 2-candidate preferred (2CP) count of ballot papers

The 2CP count involves the distribution of preferences to the two candidates considered most likely to be in the lead after a distribution of preferences. The VEC predicts the two candidates for the 2CP count shortly after nominations close. The 2CP count is for statistical purposes only and does not replace the formal distribution of preferences, if required.

The counting of early votes in the election office was able to commence at 6 pm, with staff having established a restricted zone for each early voting centre from 8 am on election day to allow for sorting and reconciling activities to occur before the close of voting.

70% of voting centres (seven out of ten) and 50% of early voting centres (one out of two) had entered the results of their first preference counts into the VEC's Election Management System by 9 pm on election night.

Centralised counting was conducted at the CAS from 6 pm on election night for TAV votes, and postal votes returned and verified prior to election day. This followed the establishment of a restricted zone between 8 am and 6 pm on election day to allow staff to first extract the ballot papers from their envelopes.

Rechecks

Rechecking is an administrative process where, following a first preference count, ballot papers are checked again for formality, correct sorting to first preference, and correct reconciliation of totals. This is a normal part of the counting process post election night and results are adjusted to correct any discrepancies.

2023 Mulgrave District by-election vote counted on election night in election day voting centres and early voting centres were rechecked on Monday 20 November 2023. Mobile votes were rechecked on Tuesday 21 November 2023.

Postal votes counted on election night were rechecked on Friday 24 November 2023. All other rechecks at CAS followed directly after the first preference count was completed (or 2CP count).

Counting after election day

Counting of remaining postal votes, marked-as-voted votes and provisional votes, and all rechecks of these votes was conducted on Friday 24 November 2023 at the CAS.

8.3 Count information

With counting activities for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election spread over several locations during the counting timeline, registered political parties and candidates were provided with information about updates to the count plan through:

- › candidate bulletins direct from the election manager to candidates, outlining counting activities in relevant venues,
- › the VEC website, where the upcoming count activities were published.

8.4 Recount requests

Recounts may be conducted at the discretion of the election manager, at the request of a candidate who provides sufficient reasons, or at the discretion of the VEC. Any recount must be conducted in the presence of appointed scrutineers. The VEC is required to provide at least 4 hours written notice of a recount to the affected candidates, registered political parties, and their nominated recount contact.

For the 2023 Mulgrave by-election, there were no requests or recommendations for a recount.

8.5 Results and declarations

As the successful candidate received an absolute majority of first preference votes, a preference distribution to obtain election result was not required. Eden Foster was the successful candidate for the election and was declared elected by the election manager on Wednesday 29 November 2023. The centrally counted votes were transported to the election office and a full preference distribution for statistical purposes was conducted on Monday 27 November 2023.

All results were progressively displayed on the VEC website and various results reports were made available to scrutineers on request. An election results media feed was also provided to media outlets and other subscribers on request.

9. Compliance and integrity



Figure 10: Flowchart of the VEC's constructive compliance approach

9.1 Electoral integrity activities

The VEC's head office collaborated closely with the election office to oversee the fulfilment of compliance activities. The regulatory advice and incidents desk model, first introduced at the 2022 State election, was once again implemented, and addressed a total of 14 cases. These cases primarily pertained to issues regarding electoral campaign material, safety of campaigners and voters at early voting centres.

Increased electoral integrity support was provided to election offices through election support officers (see **Chapter 4.4 – Staffing the election**) who were given specific training on election integrity risks that can occur in the field and appropriate measures to respond to them. Electoral integrity support extended to the VEC's head office operations and the CAS, with election integrity a key focus in the review of election planning and procedure documents.

9.2 Constructive compliance

VEC regulatory approach

The VEC adopts a constructive compliance approach for its regulatory activities, which focuses on providing electoral participants with resources to understand and comply with their obligations. Where a person or organisation fails to comply with their obligations, compliance action is taken proportionate to the VEC's assessment of harm. The VEC engages with electoral participants frequently to educate and assist them to meet compliance obligations.

Field compliance support

The VEC continued its proactive compliance strategy during the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. Notably, there were very few instances of improper behaviour reported during early voting or on election day. The VEC's electoral compliance team were proactive in identifying and addressing instances of non-compliance and were actively present in the field throughout the entire election period, including on election day, to provide support to voting centre managers and other election staff on electoral compliance matters. This proactive approach significantly contributed to a minimal need for escalation assistance during the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment

The VEC intends to expand the capacity of its electoral compliance team to triage and manage serious incidents, poor behaviour and other possible electoral offences that occur during elections and assist election staff and scrutineer management, including in regional areas.

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

9.3 Legal matters

There were no legal matters in relation to the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, and no applications to VCAT.

9.4 Compulsory voting enforcement

After each by-election, the VEC carries out compulsory voting activities in accordance with the Act as well as integrity checks that include following up apparent instances of multiple voting.

Pre-processing

Stage one – pre-excuse

The VEC commenced the formation of a non-voter notice for the 2023 Warrandyte District by-election under section 162 of the Act in early 2023. Elector and voting centre information reports completed at voting centres that provided reasons why an elector could not vote (for example due to illness, being deceased or being away from Victoria) and excuses recorded by the VEC's Public Enquiry Service were processed through the compulsory voting module of the EMS.

Overall, 807 records were investigated, with 463 individuals pre-excused from voting. The remaining individuals were not excused through this process, as the individual had voted or they were already excused by law.

Individuals excused through pre-processing are not issued with Apparent failure to vote notices.

Roll scanning

Stage two – compilation of the non-voter list

A scannable roll was used at an early voting centre during technical difficulties. 50 votes were cast using this scannable roll before returning to electronic mark-off. This was the only instance of a scannable roll being used throughout the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.

The scanning technology allows for a two mark tolerance when reading the marks on the roll against the number of ballot papers recorded as being issued. The tolerance allowed for a slight variance during the reconciliation of ballot papers.

Where the tolerance level was exceeded, each scannable roll will be manually reconciled by counting every mark on each page of the roll. This ensures that every elector marked on a roll as having voted at a voting centre was recorded in the VEC's Election Management System (EMS) and helped ensure that electors were not incorrectly issued with an Apparent failure to vote notice.

Enforcement

Stage three – Apparent failure to vote notice

The first stage of the non-voter follow-up process was conducted under Part 9, Division 2 of the Electoral Act. The VEC sent Apparent failure to vote notices to those electors who appeared not to have voted in the election. Apparent non-voters had 28 days from the date of the notice to provide a valid excuse for failing to vote, or to provide information as to where and when they voted.

A total of 6,240 Apparent failure to vote notices were issued on 9 January 2024 and mailed to electors. The final deadline for response to this notice was 6 February 2024.

All responses to the notice were assessed by VEC officers with no further action on 2,009 non-voters. As part of this enforcement activity, the VEC excused 375 non-voters for reasons of illness, specifically under the category 'the elector was ill, disabled or infirm and for that reason was unable to vote at the election or could have voted only with difficulty'. COVID 19 affected voters fall into this category.

Stage four – Infringement notice

The second stage of compulsory voting enforcement was conducted under the *Infringements Act 2006*. An Infringement notice was sent to each elector who did not respond to the Apparent failure to vote notice, or who did not provide a valid excuse. This notice included a penalty amount of \$96 for Infringement notices issued in the 2023–2024 financial year. Non-voters had 35 days to respond to the Infringement notice by making the penalty payment or seeking a review of the notice. Consideration was given to written correspondence detailing reasons for failing to vote.

During the Infringement notice stage a non-voter had the option to have their matter heard directly at the Magistrates' Court.

A total of 4,231 Infringement notices were issued on 5 March 2024 and mailed to those electors who did not respond, or who provided an invalid response to the Apparent failure to vote notice. The final due date for payments or a review of the infringement was in 9 April 2024.

Stage five – Penalty reminder notice

A Penalty reminder notice was sent to those who did not pay the infringement penalty (and had not had their infringement withdrawn as a result of an internal review). A Penalty reminder notice fee of \$27.70 was added to the original penalty amount. Non-voters had 28 days to respond to the Penalty reminder notice by making the penalty payment or seeking a review of the infringement. Like the Infringement notice stage, a non-voter had the option to have their matter heard directly at the Magistrates' Court.

Non-voters who had not paid the infringement penalty by the due date 9 April 2024 will be sent a Penalty reminder notice on 7 May 2024, with an added amount for prescribed costs. The completion date of the Penalty reminder notice stage will be 18 June 2024. Follow-up of all remaining non-voters will be instigated with the Director, Fines Victoria and will be reported in the VEC's 2023–24 Annual Report.

Statistic	Total
Total electors enrolled	47,142
Total votes issued	38,677
Electors pre-excused from voting	463
Apparent failure to vote notices sent	6,240
Infringement notices sent	4,231
Penalty reminder notices sent *	—

* Note: Penalty reminder notices will be sent on 7 May 2024.

Table 19: Compulsory voting enforcement in the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

Multiple voting

When all excuse and late return processing and roll scanning has been completed, the VEC generates a file of 'possible' multiple voters. Due to the successful implementation of electronic roll mark-off no instances of multi-voting were recorded for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, even with the 50 voters marked off the scannable roll used temporarily.

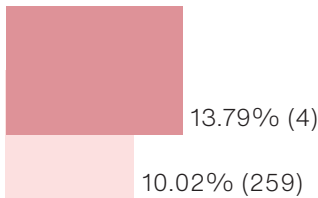
Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
<p>The VEC intends to invest in deploying electronic roll mark-off to more issuing points on election day. This will provide real-time visibility of ballot paper consumption and an additional safeguard against accidental or intentional multiple voting as election officials will be recording voter turnout through a secure online list of electors.</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>

10. Customer feedback and complaints

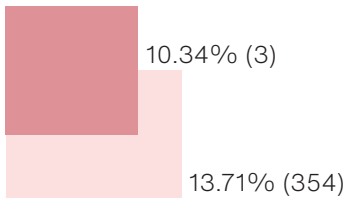
Election administration and service to voters



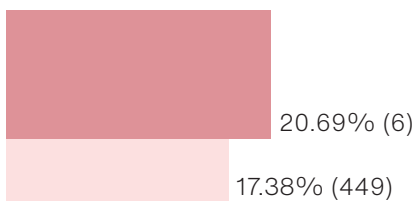
Staffing



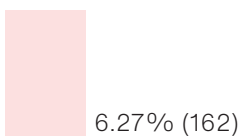
Candidates, campaign workers and parties



Advertising and electoral material



Electoral Integrity



Number of submissions

- 2023 Mulgrave District by-election
- 2022 State election

0 | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80% | 100%

Figure 11: Graphs of the number and categories of customer feedback and complaints about the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election and 2022 State election to compare proportions of categorical responses

The VEC's Customer Feedback and Complaints team received a total of 29 submissions in relation to the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election. Of these submissions, 86% (19) were categorised as complaints. Submissions discussed a range of topics, including information disseminated by the VEC about the election, advertising and electoral material (including campaign signage and calls, text messages and emails from candidates and parties), the conduct of campaign workers, the location of voting centres and the conduct of VEC staff.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Informality review

The informal voting rate at the 2023 Mulgrave by-election was 5.54% of total votes – 3.13 percentage points lower than the proportion of informal votes in Mulgrave district at the State election a year earlier. The decline is mainly due to the smaller number of candidates at the by-election – 10 compared for 14 candidates for Mulgrave at the State election. The fact that there was only one ballot paper at the by-election may have helped to reduce voter confusion.

There was a wide variation in informal voting rates within Mulgrave district. Postal voters (2.59% informal) were much less prone to vote informal, and the informal voting rate for early voters (4.95%) was also lower than the district average. In contrast, election day voters were slightly more disposed to vote informally (6.79%). The informal voting rate at voting centres ranged from 4.46% at Wheelers Hill South up to 9.72% at Harrisfield. The informal voting rate tended to be higher in the southern part of the district, and lower in the north, broadly following the socio-economic character of the suburbs composing the district.

The VEC examined all informal votes in the by-election to learn what sorts of mistakes voters made. The table below shows the results. Included for comparative purposes are the informal votes for Mulgrave district in the 2022 State election and statewide 2022 figures.

Election	Informal vote at by-election (%)	Informal vote at previous State election (%)	Change (percentage points)
2013 Lyndhurst District by-election	9.45% (No Liberal candidate)	7.06% (2010 State election)	+2.39
2015 Gippsland South District by-election	5.51% (No Australian Labor Party candidate)	5.5% (2014 State election)	+0.01
2015 Polwarth District by-election	5.16% (No Australian Labor Party candidate)	3.89% (2014 State election)	+1.27
2015 South-West Coast District by-election	6.24% (No Australian Labor Party candidate)	4.04% (2014 State election)	+2.2
2017 Northcote District by-election	5.1% (No Liberal candidate)	4.22% (2014 State election)	+0.88
2023 Narracan District supplementary election	6.58% (No Australian Labor Party candidate)	5.4% (2018 State election)	+1.18
2023 Warrandyte District by-election	5.77% (No Australian Labor Party candidate)	3.39% (2022 State election)	+2.38
2023 Mulgrave District by-election	5.54% (Candidates for both major parties contested)	8.67% (2022 State election)	-3.13

Table 20: Informal vote at by-elections and preceding State elections, 2013–2023

Table 21 shows the informal vote by detailed category for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election compared to Mulgrave District at the 2022 State election and the 2022 State election.

Category	2023 Mulgrave District by-election	Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	Victoria – 2022 State election
Blank	298 (14%)	435 (12.2%)	46,117 (21.64%)
Drawing – ballot paper crossed out	147 (6.9%)	96 (2.7%)	10,653 (5%)
Drawing – offensive	11 (0.5%)	12 (0.3%)	1,502 (0.7%)
Drawing – other	30 (1.4%)	20 (0.6%)	1,959 (0.92%)
Writing – against compulsory voting	4 (0.2%)	5 (0.1%)	134 (0.16%)
Writing – corruption	2 (0.1%)	1 (0%)	433 (0.2%)
Writing – makes no difference	16 (0.8%)	5 (0.1%)	415 (0.19%)
Writing – against the system	9 (0.4%)	0	368 (0.17%)
Writing – restricted choice	1 (0.0%)	0	191 (0.09%)
Writing – none of the above	30 (1.4%)	21 (0.6%)	4,132 (1.94%)
Writing – other protest	27 (1.3%)	28 (0.8%)	1,615 (0.76%)
Writing – other	40 (1.9%)	20 (0.6%)	5,762 (2.7%)
Numbers – 1 only	121 (5.7%)	438 (12.3%)	37,154 (17.44%)
Numbers – 1 and other symbols	17 (0.8%)	3 (0.1%)	862 (0.4%)
Numbers – no 1 but expresses preferences	8 (0.4%)	32 (0.9)	1,252 (0.59%)
Numbers – insufficient	245 (11.5%)	762 (21.4%)	28,464 (13.36%)
Numbers – sequence error	555 (26.1%)	978 (27.5%)	31,201 (14.64%)
Numbers – one box blank, one number missing	126 (5.9%)	268 (7.5%)	10,275 (4.82%)
Numbers – Langer vote	10 (0.5%)	3 (0.1%)	233 (0.11%)
Numbers – includes 0	55 (2.6%)	26 (0.7%)	3,521 (1.65%)
Numbers – obscured	4 (0.2%)	18 (0.5%)	1,203 (0.56%)
Numbers – deliberate	74 (3.5)	69 (1.9%)	4,696 (2.2%)
Numbers – other	11 (0.5%)	22 (0.6)	869 (0.41%)
Ticks/crosses – accidental	136 (6.4%)	170 (4.8%)	11,528 (5.41%)
Ticks/crosses – deliberate	99 (4.7%)	80 (2.3%)	5,878 (2.76%)

Category	2023 Mulgrave District by-election	Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	Victoria – 2022 State election
Ticks/crosses – other	23 (1.1%)	38 (1.1%)	1,661 (0.78%)
Administrative error – really formal	13 (0.6%)	6 (0.2%)	984 (0.46%)
Total	2,112	3,556	213,062

Table 21: Informal votes, 2023 Mulgrave District by-election and 2022 State election

Sequence errors were by far the largest category in the by-election (26.1%), followed by blank votes (14%) and numbers – insufficient (11.5%). Other substantial categories, with between 5.7% and 6.9% of informal votes, were ballot papers crossed out, ticks and crosses showing a preference, numbers – one box blank and one number missing, and numbers – one only. These were the same major categories as in the State election, both for the State as a whole and for Mulgrave district. However, there were significant differences, resulting from the particular characteristics of the by-election. The numbers – 1 only category was far smaller in the by-election, because voters were not influenced by the directions on State election ballot papers to vote 1 above the line for the Upper House. The smaller number of candidates accounts for the reduction in the main number-related categories in the by-election – insufficient numbers, sequence errors and ballot paper with one square blank and one number missing.

Conversely, there were significant proportional increases in several other categories, including ballot papers crossed out, votes including zero, deliberate numbering errors and ticks and crosses showing a preference. The various writing categories were small in number, but they nearly all increased in the by-election.

Table 22 shows the informal vote in broader categories. Compared with Mulgrave district in the State election, the by-election showed a marked decline in numbering errors and corresponding increases in the drawing, writing and ticks and crosses categories.

Category	2023 Mulgrave District by-election	Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	Victoria – 2022 State election
Blank	298 (14%)	435 (12.2%)	46,117 (21.64%)
Drawing	188 (8.9%)	128 (3.6%)	14,114 (6.62%)
Writing	129 (6.1%)	80 (2.2%)	13,050 (6.12%)
Numbers	1,226 (58%)	2,619 (73.7%)	118,717 (56.19%)
Ticks/crosses	258 (12.2%)	288 (8.1%)	19,067 (8.95%)
Total	2,112	3,556	213,062

Table 22: Informal votes in broader categories, 2023 Mulgrave District by-election and 2022 State election

The key question in analysing informal votes is how many voters tried to vote for a candidate but got it wrong, as against those who deliberately spoiled their vote. Table 23 shows the breakdown for the by-election and the State election.

Category	2023 Mulgrave District by-election	Mulgrave District – 2022 State election	Victoria – 2022 State election
Deliberate	843 (40%)	818 (23%)	87,376 (41.01%)
Preference	1,221 (57.8%)	2,654 (74.6%)	119,717 (56.19%)
Total	2,112	3,556	213,062

Table 23: Deliberate and preference informal votes, 2023 Mulgrave District by-election and 2022 State election

There are two contradictory patterns in the table. When the by-election is compared with Victoria as a whole, the proportions of deliberate and preference informal votes were almost identical. However, the composition of each broad category differed between the State election and the by-election. To take preference votes first, in the by-election, the decline in “1 only” votes was balanced by a higher proportion of sequence errors. (It must be remembered that there were more candidates in the by-election than the average for the State election, and that there is a strong correlation between the number of candidates and the proportion of sequence errors.) As for deliberately informal votes, the decline in blank votes was balanced by increases in various protest categories.

A more meaningful comparison is between the by-election and Mulgrave district in the State election. Here we see a dramatic increase in the proportion of deliberately informal votes (though only a minimal rise in raw numbers) and fall in preference votes. There are two main reasons for this result: the smaller number of candidates in the by-election, and the nature of a by-election itself. The abnormal number of candidates in the State election produced a flood of numbering errors. In the by-election, although the number of candidates was substantial, it was significantly easier to complete the ballot papers correctly, and so numbering errors diminished markedly.

By-elections are inherently an opportunity to lodge a protest vote, including by intentionally voting informal. In the State election there was a strong protest campaign against the incumbent Premier, and some informal ballot papers included denunciations of Daniel Andrews. However, it appears that most supporters of this campaign lodged formal votes. In the absence of Daniel Andrews in the by-election, a more normal pattern of informal protest votes cast prevailed.

In summary:

- › The lower rate of informal voting at the Mulgrave 2023 by-election compared with Mulgrave District at the 2022 election was due mostly to fewer number of candidates on the ballot paper (10 versus 14).
- › The pattern of informal voting was much closer to the overall pattern observed at the 2022 State election, in part a result of not having the incumbent State Premier contesting the election.

Appendix 2: Operational commitments

Table 1 – Actioned

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
<p>1 The VEC will continue to identify emerging trends in intensified scrutiny and electoral mis- and dis-information campaigns, and responding as required to ensure that critical election activities are not undermined. (p. 3)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC pre-bunked misinformation regarding the election writ by adding an item to its misinformation register linking to the scanned writ for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>
<p>2 The VEC will increase the number of early voting centres at future elections to respond to the increasing demand amongst Victorian voters to vote early. (p.5, p.16, p.19)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>Mulgrave District had one Early Voting Centre for the 2022 State election and two for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC commits to ensuring the OHS risk profile of the site and its surrounds is understood and treatments and controls are appropriately deployed.</p> <p>The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>
<p>3 The VEC intends to consolidate the number of election day voting centres to be able to more efficiently allocate resources to early voting. (p. 20)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>Mulgrave District had 20 voting centres for the 2022 State election and 10 voting centres for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>
<p>4 The VEC will maintain its focus on the enrolment phase of its election advertising on the close-of-roll date, so that the number of electors enrolling ‘on the day’ is manageable at voting centres, and to reduce the number of rejected provisional votes. (p. 27)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The VEC conducted radio, print and social media advertising in the week between the issue of the writ and the close of roll for the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, to encourage electors to enrol or update their enrolment prior to the close of roll. This was complemented by a media release and website content with the same key messaging.</p> <p>The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment

5 The VEC intends to expand the capacity of its electoral compliance team to triage and manage serious incidents, poor behaviour and other possible electoral offences that occur during elections and assist election staff and scrutineer management, including in regional areas. (p. 39)

2023 Mulgrave District by-election

This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.

The VEC's intelligence function produced timely assessments, informing resourcing and rostering decisions, and establishing crucial structures and communication channels for future electoral events. The VEC's electoral compliance team actively engaged with the election management team through training, defining clear lines of reporting, and escalation channels which streamlined constructive compliance, ensuring effective assessment and resolution of matters in both the field and VEC head office.

To support a timely response to any serious incidents and poor behaviour at voting locations during the event, the electoral compliance team maintained an increased presence throughout the voting period. During early voting, the team attended on average once per day.

The VEC will adopt this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.

Table 2 – In progress

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
<p>1 The VEC will increase the focus in election management training on common areas of difficulty for election managers, including managing conflict and maintaining oversight over a greater number of tasks. (p. 21)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>Experienced staff were used for the election support officer, election manager and assistant election manager roles, and as all had completed training recently as part of the 2022 State election. An additional briefing on how to respond to issues with candidate and scrutineer compliance was also provided by the VEC’s electoral compliance team.</p> <p>The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>
<p>2 The VEC intends to expand National Police Records Checks and Working with Children Checks to additional election roles at future election events. (p. 22)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>All senior election officials who supported the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election had a current National Police Records Check & Working with Children Check.</p> <p>The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>
<p>3 The VEC will conduct a website content review to ensure that all website content is up-to-date and accurate, remains accessible, and meets the needs of its audiences. (p. 27)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>The content specific to the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election was developed to be plain, accessible and audience centred.</p> <p>The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>
<p>4 The VEC intends to invest in deploying electronic roll mark-off to more issuing points on election day. This will provide real-time visibility of ballot paper consumption and an additional safeguard against accidental or intentional multiple voting as election officials will be recording voter turnout through a secure online list of electors. (p. 41)</p>	<p>This operational commitment was successfully deployed in the Mulgrave District by-election.</p> <p>For the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election, 44 laptops were rolled out across 10 voting centres for electronic roll mark-off. There was 1 scannable roll used in the Heatherhill Voting Centre due to technical issues. There were 50 votes marked off on the scannable roll before returning to electronic roll mark-off. There were no apparent multiple voters.</p> <p>The VEC plans to further progress this approach into its operating model for future electoral events.</p>

Table 3 – Not applicable to the 2023 Mulgrave District by-election

Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election – Operational Commitment	2023 Mulgrave District by-election
1 The VEC intends to further develop its partnership with the Victorian Public Service Commission, which provided a talent platform that could be leveraged for future events.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.
2 The VEC intends to further refine labour hire agency service levels for future election events, in line with the changing nature of the labour market.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.
3 The VEC will consider better promotion opportunities for Auslan interpreting services with the aim to boost access and usage.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.
4 The VEC will continue to examine ways to relieve pressures on election day voting centre staff, including greater centralisation of some count activities.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.
5 The VEC will uplift its count planning to improve the timeliness of count information and increase the period of notice given in relation to count activities.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.
6 The VEC will investigate options to better utilise the available counting timeline for Legislative Assembly election counts, while still trying to ensure that outcomes are known for as many districts as possible in a timely manner.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.
7 The VEC will investigate options to implement computerised counting more broadly for Legislative Assembly elections.	This commitment will be progressed in future elections.

Appendix 3: Public funding entitlements and payments

Recipient	2023 Mulgrave District by-election funding	
	Public funding	
	Maximum entitlement	Paid
Registered Political Parties		
MANN, Courtney (Liberal)	\$ 54,797.17	\$ 54,797.17
FOSTER, Eden (Australian Labor)	\$ 101,511.81	\$ 101,511.81
GARAD, Rhonda (Australian Greens)	\$ 15,092.53	\$ 15,092.53
Subtotal Registered Political Parties	\$ 171,401.51	\$ 171,401.51
Independent Candidates		
COOK, Ian	\$ 47,527.80	\$ 40,788.44
Subtotal Independent Candidates	\$ 47,527.80	\$ 40,788.44
Total	\$ 218,929.31	\$ 212,189.95

