

# 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council Service Plan

May 2021





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(Victorian Electoral Commission)  
May 2021

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@electionsvic

Release	Corrections
September 2021	Change to election timeline to reflect the date for the AFL Grand Final public holiday.

**Cover image:** Democracy Ambassador Etimad leading an electoral education session in 2018. Etimad is a member of the VEC’s Education & Inclusion Team, which is responsible for educating and engaging community members so that their voices can be fully heard in our democracy.



I am proud to present this election service plan detailing how the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) intends to deliver the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election.

This service plan outlines the VEC's work at each stage of the election timeline and sets targets to assess the success of the program following its completion. It also details the areas where council will be contributing to preparations for these elections and builds on the important partnership between the VEC and council.

The Victorian Parliament passed the new *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)* in March 2020 that led to changes in the election service delivery for the general elections held in that year. Changes to the Act and the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the conduct of the 2020 local government elections and the services provided to councils. The VEC will continue to monitor the environment in the lead up to and during the South Gippsland Shire Council general election and will implement necessary procedures regarding the management of staff and stakeholder health and wellbeing should COVID-19 continue to be an issue during 2021.

Delivery of the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election will require close and careful consultation with council and I undertake to do this. I am confident the election program can be delivered fully compliant with State law, with accuracy and integrity while meeting health and safety obligations.

I look forward to working alongside South Gippsland Shire Council as we deliver this election service plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Warwick Gately". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Warwick Gately AM**  
Electoral Commissioner

# Acknowledgement of Country

The VEC pays respect to Victoria's traditional owners and their elders past and present who have been custodians of this country for many thousands of years. Their living culture and their role in the life of Victoria is acknowledged by the VEC.

## History of the plan

This document has been prepared in consultation with South Gippsland Shire Council.

For further information on the Victorian Electoral Commission's (VEC's) local government program and planning for the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Councils election, contact:

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This election service plan is also available on the VEC's website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) in Microsoft Word and PDF formats.

## Contents

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<b>1. Background and purpose</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Appendix 4:</b>	<b>24</b>
VEC's role in conducting local government elections	1	Format for the supply of CEO voters list	24
Principles	1	<b>Appendix 5:</b>	<b>29</b>
Legal framework	1	Communication plan	29
Purpose of this document	2		
<b>2. Performance targets</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Appendix 6:</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>3. Proposed timeline</b>	<b>4</b>	Community engagement and education	30
Critical elements to the proposed timeline	5		
Voters' roll	5		
<b>4. Proposed election service package</b>	<b>6</b>		
Election service management	6		
Voters' roll production	6		
Advertising and communication campaign	8		
Election office and staff	9		
Local telephone enquiry service	11		
Candidates	11		
Ballot material	12		
Early voting	14		
Counting the votes	14		
Election timeline – close of voting to final result	14		
Recounts	15		
Declaration of the result	16		
Management of complaints	16		
Election report and storage of material	16		
Management of VCAT inquiries	16		
Insurances	17		
<b>5. Compulsory voting enforcement</b>	<b>18</b>		
List of non-voters	18		
Enforcement process	18		
Receipt of penalties	19		
<b>6. Costs</b>	<b>20</b>		
Contingency costs	20		
<b>Appendix 1:</b>	<b>21</b>		
Summary of initiatives and key changes	21		
<b>Appendix 2:</b>	<b>22</b>		
2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election timeline	22		
<b>Appendix 3:</b>	<b>23</b>		
Key dates for voters' roll production in 2021	23		

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# 1. Background and purpose

## VEC's role in conducting local government elections

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is the statutory election service provider to Victorian local councils. The VEC has been the sole provider of election services to Victorian local councils since 2004 and has a long history of working in partnership with the local government sector. The VEC has been the legislated provider of election services since 2015 and operates in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## Principles

The VEC's local government election service program follows three major principles:

### Service excellence

The VEC:

- aims to deliver fair and equitable elections and high quality, value for money products and services
- will perform all tasks in accordance with electoral law and approach all participants in the process fairly
- will provide a high-quality election service and will work to provide every voter with a quality and convenient service in which to exercise their democratic rights.

To effectively meet its legislative obligations the VEC must respond to a changing electoral environment and align our approach with the expectations of our voters, our clients and our partners.

### Local focus for election services

An Election Manager will be appointed by the Electoral Commissioner for the South Gippsland Shire Council election. Victorian law gives the Election Manager full responsibility for the conduct of the election. Accordingly, the

management of candidates, enquiries from the public, and vote counting will take place locally within the council area.

### Costs to be kept to a minimum

The VEC's election service plan aims to provide quality election services whilst keeping costs to a minimum. The VEC's election program will meet all statutory requirements and ensure that customer service and accuracy are not compromised. Each aspect of the 2021 South Gippsland election program, but particularly any new initiatives or procedures that are being introduced to the program for the first time, will be analysed in detail for their cost and benefits.

Although cost increases in some areas of the election program are unavoidable, the VEC will look for opportunities for efficiencies to help minimise cost increases where possible.

## Legal framework

The local government election program in Victoria is governed by the *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)* and other laws involved in local government election matters, including the *City of Melbourne Act 2001* and, in relation to compulsory voting enforcement, *Infringements Act 2006* and the *Fines Reform Act 2014*. The VEC is guided in technical and procedural matters by the regulations established under these laws.

Importantly, the Act is the basis of all local government electoral events. Following the passage of the Act through Parliament, the VEC completed an assessment of the associated legislative impacts.

A key reform of the Act stipulates a single method of voting be utilised across local government general elections with the method to be determined by the Minister.

In accordance with the Minister's determination<sup>1</sup> all elections will be held by postal voting. The postal election timeline for the South Gippsland Shire Council general election is shown in **Appendix 2**.

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<sup>1</sup> The Minister published this decision in a Special Government Gazette on 18 May 2020

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## **Purpose of this document**

The purpose of this document is to set out the VEC's plans for the delivery of the South Gippsland Shire Council general election in October 2021.

The document outlines:

- the VEC's proposed timeline for election preparations, the preparation of estimates and quotes for election services, and the election and post-election periods
- a description of the election services that the VEC proposes to deliver to council
- new areas and key changes to the VEC's election services from the 2016 and 2020 local government elections, with reasons why the change is suggested.

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## 2. Performance targets

The VEC is committed to continuing to deliver high quality election services to the local government sector. In support of this commitment, the VEC has established and published performance targets for critical areas. These targets will assist in measuring the quality and effectiveness of the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council election program.

The proposed targets include aspirational and operational measures and will allow the VEC to more accurately focus its reporting.

### Election preparation

1. Establish the election service agreement with council by 21 May 2020.
2. Establish an election office that is accessible and suitably located within the local council area and publish accurate information on its accessibility ratings.
3. Conduct a public awareness campaign to inform all voters of their opportunity to enrol and vote with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people experiencing homelessness, people living with a disability, and the Indigenous community as applicable to council.
4. Appropriately evaluate and respond to complaints and enquiries, including timely referral of compliance matters to the relevant investigating authority.

### Election conduct

5. Achieve at least 99.95% accuracy in the municipal voters' roll, excluding processing errors outside of the VEC's control.
6. Ensure all communication products are produced in an accurate and timely manner, are compliant with the legislation, and are focused on enhancing electoral understanding and participation.

7. Provide information to assist prospective candidates and ensure systems provide efficient processing of nominations and candidate information.
8. Lodge all postal ballot material with Australia Post within the required timeframes.
9. Declare all elections before 5 pm on Friday 5 November 2021.
10. Continue to maximise opportunities to increase voter participation in the election.

### Election outcomes

11. Establish robust election procedures so that no election can be overturned as a result of the VEC's processes.
12. Evaluate performance at each level of the local government election program and ensure reporting obligations are met.
13. Implement reconciliation and integrity checks to ensure correct recording of results during counting activities and during the packaging, movement and storage of election material.
14. Maintain accountability for the cost of the election and continue to identify opportunities to minimise the cost impost on council.

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### 3. Proposed timeline

Below is an overview of the key activities in the lead up to and during the election. A copy of the general election timeline is included in **Appendix 2**.

Date	Activity
<b>2021</b>	
March to end of April	Service level discussions with council, including finalising key parameters, preparing the quote and election service agreement
March	Client liaison officer briefing with council contact(s), including organising inspection of council-provided election office accommodation (if applicable)
2 March to 30 April	Period for receiving preliminary voters' roll data from council
During April	Final period for finalising election service agreement
April to June	Period for council to action the VEC's feedback on preliminary voters' roll data
Friday 21 May	Election service agreement between VEC and council fixed
July	If required within South Gippsland Shire Council, deliver outreach electoral information and education sessions to priority communities
Monday 12 July	Date for the provision of primary council enrolment data (fixed by the VEC)
Early August	Access to election office accommodation is required for connections
End August	Delivery and installation of election office resources
Friday 27 August	Close of the roll at 4 pm
Wednesday 15 September	Election office open to the public
Thursday 16 September	Certification of the voters' roll Opening of the nomination period
Tuesday 21 September	Close of nominations at 12 noon Ballot draws to determine candidate order on ballot paper
Wednesday 22 September	Opening of early voting Deadline for lodgement of personal statements and photographs at 12 noon Deadline for lodgement of candidate questionnaires at 12 noon
Friday 22 October	Close of voting at 6 pm
Monday 25 October	Extraction and counting activities commence
Friday 29 October	Postal vote receipt period closes at 12 noon
Monday 25 October to Friday 5 November	Counting and declaration
<b>2022</b>	
January	Non-voter follow up commences

### 3. Proposed timeline

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#### Critical elements to the proposed timeline

##### Election Service Agreement

The VEC will establish an election service agreement with council to ensure transparency with the costing arrangement and to administer any contingency services that may be required.

The VEC will work with council to finalise key parameters for the election so that it can prepare a quote and service level agreement. The VEC aims to have an agreement in place no later than 21 May 2021.

Compulsory voting enforcement, including the prosecution of non-voters, is a mandatory requirement under the Act and will be costed separately under the service agreement. The timeline for compulsory voting enforcement will extend beyond the 2021-22 financial year as possible prosecutions progress through the court process.

The VEC's service agreements include three service levels – (1) the preparation of the municipal voters' roll, (2) conduct of the election, and (3) compulsory voting enforcement. The same arrangement was implemented in 2016 to reflect the status of each service as separate pieces of the broader election timeline.

##### Voters' roll

The quality of each election is largely dependent on the quality of the voters' roll and the timelines that apply for roll preparation are very tight. The VEC is keen to work with council as early as possible to maximise the quality of the voters' roll and reduce the opportunity for errors. Key dates relating to the receipt of roll data from council and the preparation of the voters' roll are included in the timeline – see **Appendix 3**. Since the authority to collect individual dates of birth on notices of acquisition has been in place since 2005, the VEC expects that council will have dates of birth included with at least 90% of the Chief Executive Officer's voter lists (CEO list) records.

##### Declaration timetable

At the 2020 local government elections, the VEC declared all elections by Wednesday 11 November 2020. A change to legislation prior to the 2016 local government elections allowed for a five-day extended postal vote receipt period after election day, where votes were able to be admitted if the Election Manager was satisfied that the declaration on the ballot paper envelope was completed by the voter before the close of voting. The close of the extended postal vote receipt period for the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council election will be 12 noon on Friday 29 October.

The extraction of ballot papers will commence after the close of voting and will be finalised at the end of the extended postal vote receipt period. Counting and results therefore cannot be finalised until the extended period has expired.

For the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election, the VEC proposes to have declared the election no later than Friday 5 November. More detail regarding the proposed conduct of counts is included from page 14 of this election service plan.

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## 4. Proposed election service package

### Election service management

A client liaison officer has been appointed to supervise the election service agreement for council. The client liaison officer will communicate with the council's representative and provide regular reports on the progress of the election. The client liaison officer will be responsible for ensuring that the election is conducted in accordance with the legislation and within the terms of the service agreement. The client liaison officer is South Gippsland Shire Council's first point of contact for queries in relation to the VEC's election service. At the conclusion of the election, the client liaison officer will prepare a report on the election, including any recommendations for future elections.

The client liaison officer will work closely with the VEC's Communication Team, which will manage the advertising and communications campaign for the election. The Communication Team will coordinate the development and placement of advertising, write and distribute media releases, and prepare election information for the VEC's website. The client liaison officer will forward copies of all voter information products to council as they become available.

### Voters' roll production

The VEC provides the Electoral Commissioner's voters list (EC list) to council for council election purposes. This is the list of State electors that are enrolled within that local government area and is designed to assist in the preparation of the CEO list. The EC list is merged with the CEO list to produce the voters' roll for council for certification by the VEC.

The VEC has provided roll production services to local councils since 1995 and has developed sophisticated software tools and processing procedures for maximising the quality of the voters' roll. The process involves a preliminary file from each council for quality checking, a second CEO list at the date fixed by the VEC, and a third certification CEO list at the close of roll.

The latter two data files are compared using the VEC's software, resulting in a small 'update' file, which can be processed quickly in the two-week period allowed for production of the roll for certification. A range of roll products are then extracted from the certified roll, including electronic and hard copy rolls and ballot material mail-out files.

### Security of transferring roll data between local councils and the VEC

The VEC will again use DEx, an online secure file transfer service, to exchange roll data between local councils and the VEC. DEx has been in use since 2016 and most local council roll contacts are familiar with the service. The DEx server is hosted in Australia and complies with all relevant privacy and data protection legislation and guidelines, and greatly reduces the risk of privacy breaches during the exchange of highly sensitive roll data. The transfer of roll data between the VEC and South Gippsland Shire Council will be more convenient and timelier, particularly during the short periods to process roll information in the election timeline.

### Roll data quality

Producing a high-quality voters' roll takes significant effort and resources from council as well as the VEC. Much of this can be done well before the election timeline commences, when legislative deadlines for final roll production restrict the time available for quality assurance. By participating in the preliminary process (March -April 2020) and by investigating and acting on the reports provided from this activity before the date for the primary enrolment extract, council will be in a good position to ensure a high-quality voters' roll.

VEC software tools can easily identify exact duplicates (i.e. identical name, date of birth and address) and the council record is removed.

However, it is considerably more difficult to identify possible and probable duplicates. The VEC's Roll Management System can identify potential duplicates between council data and the Victorian register of electors. A proportion of these matches will not be able to be definitively resolved with the information available to the VEC and will have to be referred to council for a final decision.

## 4. Proposed election service package

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It is important that this process commences as early as possible so that there is time to contact voters to clarify their details, including date of birth and any property holdings.

Other checks are done to identify people who have been removed from the Victorian register of electors following medical evidence of unsound mind. In addition, the VEC makes every effort to identify CEO list voters who have been approved to have their address not shown on the State roll (i.e. silent electors) to ensure that their address is not shown on CEO lists for any other voting entitlements they have in other local councils.

The VEC has software that can, in most cases, create a valid address suitable for mailing. Addresses needing further manual clarification are also identified for council checking and correction as necessary, as these are possible ward coding errors in council data.

### Timelines

To make optimum use of the VEC's quality auditing tools, time is critical. Negotiating data compatibility, ensuring data validity, and identifying, confirming and removing duplicates all take time and effort from both VEC and council staff. The VEC aims for comprehensiveness and accuracy when creating the roll for an election so exchanging data and early quality checking of data improves the final product. See the key dates for roll production in **Appendix 3**.

### Roll production

In order for the final roll to be produced within the legislative timeframe, councils are asked to:

- ensure that at least 90% of CEO list records include dates of birth
- nominate a council officer to resolve data issues promptly during each of the roll production processing periods:
  - preliminary processing (early March – end of April)
  - primary council enrolment data (12 July – 21 August)
  - close of the roll at 4 pm Friday 27 August

- certification CEO list provided to VEC by 5 pm Monday 30 August 2021. *CEO list as at 4 pm Friday 27 August.*

- certification of the voters' roll (16 September)

- supply a preliminary CEO list in an agreed format (see **Appendix 4**) as early as possible in the cycle and, at the latest, by 30 April.
- action the reports generated by preliminary roll processing before the date fixed for requiring council enrolment data, before Monday 12 July. This will involve investigating and deciding on duplicate records, removing deceased voters and correcting invalid data
- supply the council's CEO list in the agreed format by 5 pm on Monday 12 July, extracting from the council database one record only across the whole local council for each voter who is eligible for the CEO list
- perform as much quality checking of the council enrolment data as possible before the close of roll
- supply a certification CEO list in a file in the same format as the primary enrolment data (this will be used to generate the update file), no later than 5 pm on Monday 30 August.

In processing the primary enrolment data for council, the VEC assumes that no more than 10% of the CEO list records will need to be removed because they are duplicates or deceased. This will be the case if all the preliminary reports to each council have been actioned.

The VEC values its partnership with local councils to meet these deadlines and requirements and will work with council to ensure a high-quality voters' roll. Due to the short timeframe, however, there are additional costs to the VEC if a council cannot meet these targets. Additional risk is unnecessarily introduced when slippages occur or roll feedback from the VEC is not actioned. The level of training required for VEC officers to perform these tasks makes it impossible to employ additional staff at short notice. As a result, and in consultation with the client liaison officer, the VEC may seek to recover these costs through the election service agreement.

## 4. Proposed election service package

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### Certified voters' roll

The Act requires the VEC to certify the voters' roll. The VEC is also responsible for making the certified voters' roll available for inspection beginning on the day it is certified until 30 days after election day.

### Provision of voters' rolls to candidates

On request, the VEC will provide each candidate with a copy of the voters' roll for the election in which the candidate has nominated. The roll is provided for election purposes only.

These rolls will be provided by the VEC electronically via DEx and will be in a user-friendly format to assist candidates with direct mail campaigning. Before providing the voters' roll to a candidate, they are required to declare that the information will only be used for campaign purposes. The voters' roll must be destroyed or returned to the VEC following the election. The VEC will follow up with candidates directly to remind them of their obligations to dispose of roll data following the election.

### Advertising and communication campaign

The VEC will deliver a voter information campaign on a local basis. The campaign will be developed to:

- meet statutory requirements
- increase voters' awareness of their rights and obligations
- maximise voter turnout
- minimise the informal vote.

The VEC will provide advertising services, media relations, election information and certain advertisements on the VEC's website, and an SMS and email notification service (VoterAlert). Information in languages other than English will also be part of the VEC's standard package, where applicable.

### Statutory and other advertising

Statutory advertisements will appear in the general news section of local newspapers nominated by council and on the VEC website, and will comprise the following:

- a 'notice of election' advertisement: including how to nominate, details of candidate information session/s, an electorate map and, where applicable, a summary of any variations resulting from a representation review
- a 'voting details' advertisement: including information on how to vote, formality, and how to contact the election office to request replacement ballot material
- a 'declaration of results' advertisement.

The VEC will arrange for additional advertising by way of a close of roll notice and voting reminder notice to be published in newspapers nominated by council and on the VEC website.

Local press advertising for council will include a telephone enquiry number for the election office, a National Relay Service enquiry number (for people who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or speech impaired) and the VEC's website address.

The notice of election advertisement will also include messaging around the registration requirement for voters who wish to have their ballot material provided in Braille or large print format in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

### VoterAlert

The VEC has a VoterAlert service (email and SMS notifications). This service is used to engage State-enrolled voters who had supplied a mobile phone number and/or email address. A rolling program of messages remind voters to check their enrolment details before the close of rolls. Further messages will be sent during the voting period with reminders to vote and links to the VEC website for further information.

Around 50% of voters on the State enrolment register with contact details are opted in to this service.

For the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council elections the VEC will provide this service free of charge.

## 4. Proposed election service package

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### Multi-language telephone interpreting service

Interpreter enquiries specific to the election will be costed back to council. Incoming calls are directed to a Language Loop interpreter, who then links to the VEC in a three-way telephone conversation to relay information in the person's preferred language.

### Mail-out to blind and vision-impaired voters

The VEC will liaise with Vision Australia (Vic) and Blind Citizens (Vic) to produce material to be sent to voters within the South Gippsland Shire on each of their databases. The communication will make these voters aware that elections are occurring, and provide basic information about the elections, contact details for further information, and a special hotline number for those who wish to register for Braille or large print ballot material.

### Uncontested election leaflet

If, at the close of nominations, a ward election is uncontested, a leaflet will be mailed to affected voters, informing them that their election is uncontested, and they are not required to vote for that election. The leaflet will provide the name of the candidate(s) who have nominated and will, in due course, be declared elected. The leaflet will substantially reduce the potential for confusion among voters who are aware of the election but do not receive a ballot pack in the mail.

Voters enrolled in uncontested wards who are opted-in to VoterAlert will also be sent a VoterAlert message by SMS, email or both to advise them that the election is uncontested.

### VEC website

The VEC website will feature comprehensive information about the South Gippsland Shire Council general election. Content will be updated at each phase of the election cycle including information about:

- enrolment
- nominating for election
- early voting (prior to the mail out of ballot packs) details of how to vote and when ballot packs will be posted

- redirection of ballot packs
- replacement ballot packs
- the close of voting
- election results.

Results information will be published on the VEC website and will include first preference results, preference distribution results (including a downloadable preference distribution report, if required), and the names of elected candidates.

The VEC will direct voters to the website in all advertisements and any printed material produced, as well as by providing content to each council to assist the council to link directly to that council's election page on the VEC's website.

### Reminder advertisement

A final reminder for voters to cast their votes will be included. This advertisement will be listed in the council's nominated local press and it will:

- remind voters of the close of voting
- list where ballot material can be hand delivered
- provide instructions on how to apply for a replacement postal vote
- advise who has to vote
- include contact details for further information.

### Election office and staff

#### Election Manager, Assistant Election Manager and staff

The VEC maintains a pool of trained senior election officials located across the State to fill election management roles that occur for State and local government elections. The Election Manager will appoint at least one Assistant Election Manager to support them during the election. The Election Manager and Assistant Election Manager appointed by the VEC will have satisfactorily completed a comprehensive online training program as well as a number of home study modules prior to their appointment.

## 4. Proposed election service package

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The Election Manager will be authorised to appoint the optimum number of staff required to ensure the cost-effective and successful conduct of the election.

An election support officer will be appointed to support the Election Manager during the election period. Located at the VEC's head office, the election support officer will be the first point of contact for the Election Manager for assistance and advice on legislative, procedural, and technical matters. All election support officers appointed by the VEC are experienced electoral practitioners.

### **Election office**

The VEC will establish an election office within the council area. The VEC will endeavour to source an office that is conveniently positioned for candidates and voters and meets the VEC's accessibility and security standards. Importantly, the office must meet social distancing requirements associated with COVID-19 and will remain under constant review. Should council have suitable space available for an election office within its own premises, or other premises owned or operated by council, the VEC will work with council to determine its suitability. The VEC must be the sole occupant of the premises during the election period.

The election office will be clearly identified, with appropriate signage and security. The VEC will check all access points and, where necessary, arrange for new locks to be fitted.

For South Gippsland Shire Council, the recommended office space is approximately 500 sq. meters. A space of around 500 sq. meters would also allow counting activities to be conducted on-site. Although it may be necessary to secure additional space for counting activities based on social distancing requirements, the council structure, contested elections and count type i.e. computer.

It is noted that the most suitable spaces for election offices have open floor plans without built in cubicles or multiple individual offices. The prospective election office will be assessed by the VEC and must meet the strict standards for occupational health and safety including social distancing, accessibility, security and storage.

The VEC will require access to the election office by the end of August 2021 in order to deliver necessary furniture and materials and install and commission telephones and computers in time for the opening of the office.

The VEC will arrange the collection of materials and equipment from the election office as soon as practicable once the declaration has been completed.

### **Ballot paper security**

An important focus of the VEC at all elections continues to be the secure storage and transport of used and unused ballot papers. The VEC has implemented logistical and security procedures that ensure ballot papers are always stored in lockable storage areas, and ballot paper accountability and reconciliation has been increased, as well as awareness of the safe and secure custody and transfer of ballot papers during the election timeline. The VEC will implement similar procedures for the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election.

The VEC will assess the election office venue for its compliance with the security standards. Training for the Election Manager and Assistant Election Manager will reinforce the VEC's stringent security expectations. Where necessary, the VEC will provide temporary secure storage for ballot papers, such as secure cages. Should any physical modifications be required to the election office to meet secure storage requirements, these will be made in consultation with the council (for council provided election office accommodation), or the property manager/owner (for leased election office accommodation), pursuant to any lease arrangements.

### **Furniture and equipment**

The VEC will provide the Election Manager with a network of computers, photocopier/multi-function device, letter openers, ballot paper counting machines, cardboard furniture and other furniture and equipment. These items present a modern corporate image to the community and have proved cost-effective for use over a limited period.

## 4. Proposed election service package

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### Computerised election management system

The computerised election management system that is provided to the Election Manager contains details of each individual election and the voters' rolls. Nominations, candidate statements (postal elections), candidate questionnaire answers, early and postal vote details and results are all entered by the Election Manager directly into the computer application. This interfaces with systems at the VEC to produce the artwork for printing ballot papers, candidate statements and other products required for the election and to publish information directly onto the VEC's website.

### Office hours

The Election office will be open to the public, from Wednesday 15 September until Friday 22 October. Election office opening hours will be from 9 am to 5 pm weekdays, except for the last two days before election day when the election office will close at 8 pm on Thursday 21 October and 6 pm on Friday 22 October.

### Local telephone enquiry service

The Election Manager will provide a local telephone enquiry service to handle election enquiries during the election period. The service will operate during office hours. Telephone enquiry staff will be located at the election office and will be provided with access to look-up tools containing key details for the election.

### Candidates

#### Information session

The VEC will prepare and make available information regarding standing for election. This information will be available close to the opening of nominations. It is intended that the Election Manager will conduct a face-to-face candidate information session for the election, however should the environment change in the lead up to the election it may be necessary to move the information session online. Irrespective of the method in which the information session is conducted it will cover the election timeline, the procedures and rules relevant to candidates (with particular emphasis on the mandatory local government training, and rules regarding election

advertising that are often the subject of complaints). The Election Manager will ensure that prospective candidates are aware that the VEC is responsible for the conduct of the election and that election enquiries should be directed to the election office, not council staff.

The Election Manager will be equipped with candidate kits for prospective candidates, which will contain a handbook and any forms relevant to candidature. This information will also be available on the VEC's website.

### Nominations

The Election Manager will receive and record nominations from candidates, including the receipt of the \$250 nomination fee.

Nomination processes will be subject to strict social distancing requirements at the election office and prospective candidates will be required to complete the VEC's online visitor log. Prospective candidates must liaise early with the Election Manager to arrange an appointment.

Prospective candidates will be encouraged to complete their nomination form using the VEC's online Candidate Helper, which allows candidates to print a populated nomination form containing a unique identifier for easy lodgement with the Election Manager. Nomination forms completed using the Candidate Helper must still be lodged with the Election Manager, but the nomination process will be more efficient for candidates when they do visit the election office. The unique identifier printed on nomination forms prepared using the online Candidate Helper allows Election Managers to retrieve the candidate's data and load it directly into the VEC's election management system.

In all cases, candidates will be required to quality assure their nomination information. The Election Manager will carefully run through the candidate declaration before the declaration is signed by the candidate and the nomination completed.

The list of candidates who have nominated for the election will be regularly updated on the VEC's website. Candidates' names and public contact details, where provided, will appear soon after a full quality assurance process has been completed for their nomination. The VEC anticipates updates to the lists of candidates on

## 4. Proposed election service package

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the VEC website to be made at approximately 11 am and 5 pm on each day during the nomination period, and the final list of candidates as soon as possible after the close of nominations.

### **Draw for ballot paper position**

The Election Manager will conduct a ballot draw to determine the order that candidates' names will appear on the ballot paper as soon as practicable after the close of nominations.

Ballot draws will be conducted electronically with the order of names on the ballot paper determined by a computerised random draw. Electronic draws have been used for State elections since 1999 and for local government elections since 2008.

The VEC's electronic application has been independently audited to ensure the result is random. Electronic ballot draws create significant efficiencies, reducing the risk and time involved with manual data entry of ballot draw results and thus the time between the draws and dispatching ballot paper files to the printer. The electronic draw also enables the publication of the final list of candidates, in ballot paper order, to be updated to the VEC's website by 5 pm after the close of nominations.

Arrangements for the conduct of ballot draw will be communicated to candidates and other interested parties closer to the close of nominations.

### **Candidate statements and photographs**

The Election Manager will receive candidates' personal statements and photographs. Prospective candidates will also be able to complete the forms to lodge their personal statements using the VEC's online Candidate Helper. This will enable candidates to print their statement ready for lodgement with the Election Manager. Again, this will streamline the process for candidates and allow the Election Manager to load the statement directly into the VEC's election management system. Candidates, or their authorised representative, will be required to quality assure the information entered into the election management system. Candidates will be encouraged to provide an electronic version of their photograph that will be directly loaded into the election management system. Hard copy

photographs are also acceptable; however, these will take more time to format and load into the system.

The candidate handbook will provide clear information on the requirements for preparing and submitting statements and photographs. The Election Manager will not assist candidates with the preparation of their statement content.

Completion of the candidate statement is voluntary. The completed statements will be accessible to voters on the VEC website, in election offices and will be included in the postal ballot pack.

### **Candidate questionnaires**

The Election Manager will receive answers to candidate questionnaires completed by candidates. Candidates will also be able to complete their questionnaire using the VEC's online Candidate Helper prior to lodging it with the Election Manager. The completed questionnaires will be accessible to voters on the VEC website and available at the election office.

Completion of the candidate questionnaire is voluntary. However, the VEC will publish advice showing which candidates did not lodge answers to the candidate questionnaire or did not answer any particular question.

### **Refund of Nomination Fee**

Candidates who receive 4% or more of the formal first preference vote, or who are elected, will have their nomination fee refunded as soon as practicable after the declaration of the election.

Nomination fees will be refunded to eligible candidates by direct credit into a nominated bank account or, where requested, by cheque. Payments of fees forfeited by candidates who are ineligible to have their nomination fee returned will be sent to council at the same time.

### **Ballot material**

VEC employees will supervise all stages in the preparation, printing, assembly and dispatch of ballot material.

The VEC has a service agreement with Australia Post for the provision of postal facilities and

## 4. Proposed election service package

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services for the election. Discussions will be held with the security printers and mail house to ensure that coordination between the VEC, printer, mail house and Australia Post is as effective as possible.

### **Ballot paper and candidate statements leaflet**

The ballot papers will be printed with a background security screen using a different colour for each ward.

The ballot papers will be printed as a combined product attached to the candidates' statements to minimise the risk of any errors occurring when the products are mechanically inserted into ballot packs at the mail house. The ballot papers will have a perforation along the edge that joins the ballot paper to the candidates' statements. The voter will detach the ballot paper before marking their vote.

### **Reply-paid and outer envelopes**

The VEC will establish a unique reply-paid number for each ward in the council. The reply-paid envelope will feature a coloured block (matching the colour of the ballot paper) on the left-hand side of the envelope, which also contains brief instructions to post the ballot paper on time, as well as thumb prints matching the ballot paper colour for the ward. This facilitates pre-sorting of the envelopes to wards by Australia Post and maximises the accuracy of the sorting. The outer envelope is a window-faced envelope with a distinct marker to ensure voters easily recognise that the envelope contains official election material.

All outer envelope stock containing ballot material will show the Australia Post "PRIORITY" indicator for priority service delivery.

### **Ballot paper envelopes**

The postal ballot paper envelopes have been specially designed for use at local government elections to conform to the relevant legislative requirements.

The envelopes are designed so that their contents are not visible through the security lining and the declaration flap can be separated from the envelope by election officials before the ballot paper is extracted.

### **Addressing, assembly and delivery of ballot packs**

The VEC's contracted mail house will directly print the voters' addresses (mailing and entitlement address) and barcodes on the ballot paper envelopes in preparation for assembly and delivery of ballot packs.

The mail house will assemble ballot packs for each contested election and will lodge the ballot packs with Australia Post over three days, with no more than 35% of any ward lodged on any one day in accordance with the legislation. The mail house used by the VEC has allocated a secure area within its operations that will be used solely for the printing, insertion and dispatch of ballot material to ensure the highest standards in security are met.

As previously mentioned, ballot packs will be lodged with Australia Post under the priority delivery timetable. Australia Post has undertaken to deliver each day's lodgement of ballot packs to voters in accordance with their priority mail guidelines.

### **Redirection of ballot material**

Voters can apply to have their ballot material redirected to an address other than their entitlement address. Voters have until the certification day for the voters' roll (also the day that nominations open) to apply for their ballot material to be redirected. The VEC will arrange for ballot material to be delivered to any voter applying for redirection to the address specified in their request.

### **Replacement ballot material**

Any voters who contact the Election Manager claiming to have lost or spoiled their ballot material, or who claim not to have received a ballot pack, will be issued with replacement ballot material. The Election Manager can monitor the issue and return of replacement ballot material through the VEC's election management system to ensure that no voter is able to have more than one ballot paper admitted to the count.

## 4. Proposed election service package

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### Return of ballot paper envelopes

Ballot paper envelopes returned by the voter to the election office will be via the allocated Australia Post facility, pre-sorted by the reply-paid number corresponding to each ward.

The Election Manager will ensure daily reconciliation of mail received and supervise the scanning of ballot paper envelopes through the VEC's election management system to record their return.

Ballot paper envelopes will then be batched in totals of 50s (for balancing at scrutiny) and stored in a secure location until after the close of voting.

### Security of ballot material

Interfering with ballot material is a serious offence managed under sections 294 and 296 of the Act and those found guilty of committing such an offence are liable for a term of imprisonment of five years, or a fine of 600 penalty units.

As discussed early in this election service plan, the VEC will implement a number of measures for the security and storage of ballot material at the election office and, if applicable any standalone extraction and/or counting venue.

These measures are in addition to tightened accountability and reconciliation procedures governing the custody and transfer of ballot material.

### Early voting

Prior to the general mail-out of ballot packs, the Election Manager will issue ballot papers to voters to whom special circumstances apply. Voters in this category can apply to the Election Manager for an early in-person vote during standard office hours.

### Counting the votes

The counting methods that apply for local government elections are proportional representation (PR) for multiple vacancy wards and unsubdivided councils and preferential for single vacancy wards.

Counting of the votes after close of voting for the South Gippsland Shire Council election will be conducted by PR counts. The VEC will conduct the PR counts using its computer count application.

The information below is provided as a guide as the timetable for each activity, and individual count plans for each council will be established once the final number of candidates and contested elections is known.

### Election timeline – close of voting to final result

#### Counting activities from close of voting

Due to the extended postal vote receipt period, counting for elections will be over two phases. The first phase is undertaken following the close of voting. Priority will be given to the extraction and counting of returned votes from the general mail-out where the original ballot pack is the only vote issued to, and returned by, the voter.

The second phase will take place after the close of the extended period, when all votes that can be considered for inclusion in the count have been received (including any replacement votes). At this time the Election Manager will complete processing of all replacement votes received in the election office.

They will generate a report to identify any envelopes where the original ballot pack and replacement pack(s) appear to have been returned for the same voter and will action each return as prescribed.

At each phase, the relevant ballot paper envelopes are located and dealt with by the Election Manager in accordance with procedures specified in Regulations. No extraction can take place until these processes are complete.

A balance figure will be established for each ward in preparation for the extraction of ballot papers.

#### Checking unenrolled declarations

Declarations completed by unenrolled voters will be checked during the voting period with final checking to be completed no later than Friday 29 October. The VEC will support the Election Manager with determining the entitlement of

## 4. Proposed election service package

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unenrolled declarations and coordinating the checking process with councils as necessary.

### Counting activities from Monday 25 October

From Monday 25 October, teams of counting staff will commence processing of phase one ballot papers and will remove the flaps containing the voter details from the ballot paper envelopes to be included in the count, open the ballot paper envelopes and extract the ballot papers in the presence of any scrutineers. The ballot papers will be tallied to ensure that all ballot papers have been extracted from the envelopes.

The same procedure will be followed for ballot material to be included in the count after the close of the extended postal vote receipt period.

It should be noted that additional accommodation may be required for the opening, extraction and counting of ballot papers.

### Computer counts

As stated, the count for South Gippsland Shire Council will be conducted by computer and is anticipated to take place at the election office. Extracted ballot papers will be sorted to remove those that are obviously informal. Ballot papers identified as obviously informal are totalled and fully rechecked at the count centre. The remaining ballot papers are batched into totals of 50s in preparation for data entry. Data entry of phase one ballot papers will commence during the week following election day with final data entry to occur after all phase two processing has been completed after the close of the extended postal vote receipt period.

The VEC will establish the computer infrastructure required for the conduct of the computer count.

The number of data entry operators required for the computer count venue will be confirmed following the close of nominations. Data entry operators will be supervised by trained computer count team leaders.

The timetable for data entry of ballot papers for each ward will be determined after the close of nominations - when the number of candidates and any uncontested elections is known.

It is anticipated that data entry will commence for the computer count from Tuesday 26 October and will be completed by Monday 1 November, at the latest. Candidates and council will be advised on the proposed counting timetable after the close of nominations as commencement dates and times may shift if social distancing requirements are necessary to be built into the count schedules.

An area within the computer count venue will be established to allow the Election Manager to recheck all informal ballot papers.

Ballot papers initially deemed to be informal, or those identified as informal during data entry that – are later confirmed as formal – will be returned to data entry.

Results will be calculated at the completion of data entry for all wards. Distribution reports that detail the count will be distributed as soon as possible after the completion of each result calculation. Results will be displayed on the VEC website as soon as possible after the completion of all counts for the council.

### Recounts

At any time before a candidate has been declared elected, the Election Manager may open any sealed parcel containing ballot papers and recount the ballot papers:

- if they think fit
- at the written request of a candidate specifying reason.

In making a decision to conduct a recount, the Election Manager will consider:

- the occurrence of close margins at critical points during the distribution of preferences
- any procedural or system error or failure that may have interrupted or interfered with the counting process
- the accessibility of the counting process for scrutineers to properly perform their duties.

The VEC head office will support the Election Manager to ensure that all relevant checks and

## 4. Proposed election service package

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balances have taken place prior to the commencement of any recount.

The Election Manager's interpretation of what constitutes a close margin is informed by the VEC's historical experience at previous recounts. This has shown that limited variation occurs when comparing the final or critical recounted margin to the original count. In particular, the greatest variation in recounts conducted by the VEC since 2008, where counting has been performed by computer data entry, has been seven.

### Declaration of the result

It is expected that the Election Manager will complete all declarations at least by Friday 5 November.

A minimum of two hours will be allowed between the completion of the computerised counts, and the declaration. This allows reasonable time for candidates to consider distribution reports and decide if they wish to request a recount. The Election Manager will advise candidates at the completion of the count if the proposed declaration time needs to be extended to allow for this requirement. Once the declaration takes place, the only avenue to request a recount is by application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

### Management of complaints

Complaint management is an important component of conducting an election. Many complainants consider that proving a breach of the Act will lead to an election result being overturned by a Court process.

Complaints generally fall into two categories:

If the complaint relates to:

1. **the administration of the election** – the Electoral Commissioner's delegate will respond on behalf of the Election Manager
2. **a possible breach of the Act** – investigation and response to these complaints is the responsibility of the Local Government Inspectorate. The VEC will refer the complaint directly to the Inspectorate for a response and copy the complainant of this action.

The VEC will provide specific information regarding the management of complaints in the candidate handbook. This will include the different responsibilities of the Election Manager and the Local Government Inspectorate.

A high proportion of the complaints received during local government elections allege the distribution of misleading or unauthorised electoral material. A number of these are escalated by complainants.

Previous decisions by the (Municipal Electoral Tribunal) MET have been dismissed as the courts have been specifically concerned with material likely to mislead or deceive voters in relation to the casting of the vote. This is a very narrow definition in comparison to what many candidates generally consider to be misleading.

The VEC has included further information in its candidate handbook and candidate information sessions, to help candidates better understand what is considered to be misleading under the Act.

### Election report and storage of material

The VEC will provide council with a report on the conduct of the elections within six months of election day as required by legislation.

After the declaration of election(s), the Election Manager will package all ballot papers together with all other materials used at the election in sealed security boxes. The boxes will be clearly labelled to indicate contents, the ward and the date of the election and will be returned to the VEC warehouse for secure storage.

### Management of VCAT inquiries

Section 311 of the Act allows a candidate, 10 persons entitled to vote at the election, or the VEC to dispute the validity of a local council election through an application to the VCAT within 14 days of the declaration of result for the election.

Following the 2020 local government elections, nine applications were lodged with the VCAT including one application initiated by the VEC.

In developing its cost recovery model for VCAT inquiries, the VEC notes that not all cases impugn

#### 4. Proposed election service package

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the VEC or the Election Manager. Nevertheless, the VEC is named as a party to respond to an application. Where the VEC is not directly impugned, the VEC may request to be removed as the respondent and/or be invited by the VCAT to remain as an interested party to assist the proceeding. However, in all inquiries following the 2016 local government elections, the MET required the VEC to continue to be a party to the application, even when the VEC was not directly associated with the claims made by the applicant.

The VEC will continue to recover costs associated with responding to a VCAT inquiry on a shared basis with the council involved. The VEC will not recover the cost if it is found by the VCAT to be at fault and may absorb a portion of the costs associated with responding to a VCAT inquiry where there is an opportunity for building electoral knowledge.

In circumstances where the VEC is involved in a VCAT hearing, the VEC will generally be represented by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO). The VEC may engage outside counsel through the VGSO, or in addition to or instead of working with the VGSO.

#### **Insurances**

The VEC maintains sufficient insurance coverage relevant to all of its activities, including its conduct of local government elections.

Where a re-election is required as a result of an error or action by the VEC or Election Manager, the VEC will meet the cost of the new election. In all other re-election circumstances, the VEC will liaise with its insurers and/or the relevant council in relation to the cost of the new election.

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## 5. Compulsory voting enforcement

The Act requires the VEC to carry out compulsory voting enforcement for all councils at local government elections. Legislation also allows the prosecution of non-voters who do not satisfactorily respond during the enforcement process.

The VEC is equipped with the systems that allow it to manage non-voter follow through to, and including, prosecution. For the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council elections, it is only compulsory for voters on the EC list to vote.

### List of non-voters

The requirements for the list of non-voters is prescribed in regulations. The list of non-voters will exclude any non-voters who are automatically exempt from compulsory voting.

### Enforcement process

The VEC is obliged to enforce the compulsory voting provisions of the Act at the election. The VEC's enforcement program will involve three stages. During each stage of the process, the VEC will update council and provide statistical information regarding the number of apparent failure to vote notices issued, apparent non-voters who have replied, paid the fine, been excused, not been excused or who have not replied to the notice, and the number of infringements referred to Fines Victoria by the VEC.

The VEC will commence its compulsory voting enforcement program in early January 2022. The first step in the process is a requirement of the Act and the remaining steps are relevant to provisions of the *Infringements Act 2006*. The process is as follows:

#### Apparent Failure-to-vote Notice

The VEC will prepare and send an apparent failure-to-vote notice to all voters who appear to have failed to vote and are not automatically exempt. The VEC anticipates being in a position to dispatch these notices in early February 2022.

#### Infringement Notice

The VEC may prepare and send an infringement notice to any apparent non-voter whose reason for not voting is not deemed sufficient or who failed to reply to the apparent failure-to-vote notice. A penalty applies to this notice and will be collected on behalf of council.

When issued with an infringement notice a non-voter may submit detailed evidence for not voting, or they may seek a review of the infringement. If the VEC determines that the evidence provided is sufficient the infringement will be withdrawn. A 'Withdrawal of Infringement' letter must be mailed to each of these non-voters. This will be an additional cost to councils.

During the infringement stage non-voters may elect to have their matter heard directly in the Magistrates' Court.

#### Penalty Reminder Notice

The VEC may prepare and send a Penalty Reminder Notice to those non-voters who have not paid the infringement penalty. The original penalty plus a penalty reminder notice fee applies to this notice and will be collected on behalf of council.

'Withdrawal of Infringement' letters must be mailed to each non-voter in this category where an internal review results in the withdrawal of the infringement. This will be an additional cost to council.

During the penalty reminder stage non-voters may elect to have their matter heard directly in the Magistrates' Court.

#### Lodgement with the courts

At the end of the Penalty Reminder Notice period, the VEC may commence proceedings against any non-voters who requested for the matter to be heard in the Magistrates' Court. Costs will be incurred to take such action.

These costs will be passed on to council. Prior to lodging the matters with the Magistrates' Court, the VEC will take every step to ensure that only genuine requests to go to court proceed to court.

## 5. Compulsory voting enforcement

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The VEC will also collate any outstanding infringements at the conclusion of non-voter follow-up for council into a final court file and lodge the file with Fines Victoria for prosecution within the legislated deadlines.

Prosecution of non-voters at the Magistrates' Court and through Fines Victoria involve significant time and resources. Matters referred to the Court and Fines Victoria can be expected to continue into subsequent financial years (i.e. beyond 2021-22).

### **Receipt of penalties**

The VEC will receive and record all payments made in relation to compulsory voting enforcement on behalf of council. Council will be provided with the penalties received from voters at an agreed time.

Councils will continue to receive penalties collected by the VEC or through Fines Victoria on a quarterly basis once all necessary reconciliations have been completed.

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## 6. Costs

The VEC is conscious of providing a cost-efficient election service to the local government sector and will work to minimise costs wherever possible.

Since 2016, inflationary pressures have increased some of the VEC's costs and this is taken into account as the VEC begins to prepare cost estimates for council. Significant unit price cost increases have occurred with:

- communication and advertising costs, particularly in relation to major daily newspapers and the shift to magazine layout for some local publications
- Australia Post postage rates
- rates of pay for senior election officials, and election staff, which are linked to rates in the Victorian Public Service enterprise agreement
- market rent for election office accommodation
- paper for the production of ballot material
- transport and logistics in relation to the movement and delivery of equipment and ballot material, particularly courier costs and freight
- travel costs, particularly in relation to the cost of fuel (reflected in the per kilometre mileage allowance rate).

The VEC will continue to apply a marginal cost recovery model where all direct costs are recovered. These costs include personnel and associated on-costs, stationery and material, equipment, mail processes, advertising and communications, printing, rent and utilities, insurances, IT infrastructure, and licences that are costed to the election. The VEC's cost recovery model only includes those head office/administrative costs associated with contractors that are specifically employed for the election.

The VEC does not recover salaries for core staff working on local government elections and overheads, such as head office and VEC warehouse accommodation.

Some marginal costs are also not recovered because the VEC would be incurring the cost regardless of local government elections (i.e. depreciation of VEC equipment and materials).

### Contingency costs

There are a number of contingency costs that will also be included in the VEC's costing program on a fee-for-service arrangement. In some cases, it is not possible to estimate the cost and provision for contingency services, which need to be factored into the electoral service agreement.

Examples of the contingency costs include responding to a VCAT inquiry (as discussed earlier in this election service plan) and the prosecution of non-voters through the Victorian court system including the Infringements and Magistrates' Courts where applicable. There are also a number of other unanticipated costs that may arise during the election timeline where a council requires a variation to the established parameters for the election (i.e. access to suitable election office, extraction and counting accommodation)

In all cases, the VEC's client liaison officer will discuss contingency costs with the contact officers at council.

# Appendix 1:

## Summary of initiatives and key changes

The following table summarises initiatives and key changes to the election services offered by the VEC at the 2020 local government elections. The VEC will implement the same for the South Gippsland Shire Council general election.

### 1. Ballot paper security

At the 2018 Victorian State election, and the 2020 Local Government elections, the VEC implemented a number of further measures for security and management of a ballot paper throughout its lifecycle. The VEC is committed to implementing these measures across its entire election program, including the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election.

### 2. Online enrolment for State electors

Under a joint roll arrangement, the State and the 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 help update the Victorian register of electors.

At the 2016 local government elections the VEC offered an online enrolment facility to allow State electors to enrol to vote and update their enrolment details through the VEC website. The VEC discontinued its online enrolment function in August 2017. The current links on the VEC's website to update an elector's details or enrol redirect to the Australian Electoral Commission website.

### 3. VoterAlert

For the 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election, the VEC proposes to roll out a similar service to that provided at the 2018 State election, subsequent local government by-elections and at the 2020 local government elections where State-enrolled voters will be reminded to check their enrolment details prior to the close of rolls, and then sent two voting reminders during the voting period. VoterAlert gives voters the ability to select whether they receive an SMS, an email or both SMS and email.

## Appendix 2:

### 2021 South Gippsland Shire Council general election timeline

#### SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2021 ELECTION TIMELINE

Council primary enrolment data	JUL 12	MON	(Date fixed by VEC)
Public notice of Close of Roll Date (Published during this period)	AUG 7	SAT	
	AUG 13	FRI	
Close of Roll	AUG 27	FRI	4.00 pm (57 days before Election Day)
Publication of Election Notice (Published during this period)	AUG 30	MON	
	SEP 4	SAT	
<b>Opening of election office</b>	SEP 15	WED	
Certification of voters' roll Opening of nominations	SEP 16	THU	
Nomination Day	SEP 21	TUE	Nominations close at 12 noon Ballot draw to follow
Lodgement of candidate statements, photographs and questionnaires	SEP 22	WED	Candidate statements, photos and questionnaires close at 12 noon
(AFL Grand Final public holiday)	SEP 24	FRI	
Mail-out of ballot packs/ Uncontested ward leaflets	OCT 5	TUE	
	OCT 6	WED	
	OCT 7	THU	
<b>CLOSE OF VOTING</b>	OCT 22	FRI	Voting closes at 6.00 pm
Election Day	OCT 23	SAT	
Postal vote receipt period	OCT 25	MON	
	OCT 29	FRI	Postal vote receipt closes at 12 noon
	NOV 2	TUE	Melbourne Cup Day Public Holiday

**All elections to be declared by Friday 5 November.**

## Appendix 3:

### Key dates for voters' roll production in 2021

- Green shaded items are council actions.

Note that the VEC expects date of birth on at least 90% of council CEO list records.

Task	Key Dates
■ Preliminary CEO list provided to VEC	Tuesday 2 March
■ Preliminary feedback for council action	April – June 2021
■ Council uses feedback to correct database* (remove deceased and duplicate records, correct invalid data)	Before Monday 12 July 2021
■ Council mails renewal forms to all applicants on 2016 roll (Section 240(11) of the Local Government Act 2020)	Before Monday 12 July 2021
■ Date for primary council enrolment data (CEO list) to VEC*	By 5 pm, Monday 12 July 2021
Close of the roll	Friday 27 August (4 pm) 2021
NOTE; Changes to the roll from the date for primary enrolment data (12 July) until close of the roll (27 August) must be applied before certification. These will be calculated by the VEC from two full roll extracts (primary enrolment and certification) provided by councils in identical format.	
■ Certification CEO list provided to VEC. CEO list as at 4pm Friday 27 August.	By 5pm Monday 30 August 2021
Roll certification and nominations open	Thursday 16 September 2021
Election day	Saturday 23 October 2021
■ *It is expected that council CEO list data at the primary enrolment data point will be accurate to the extent that no more than 10% of council records will need to be removed during roll processing.	

## Appendix 4:

### Format for the supply of CEO voters list

Data you provide to the VEC must be clearly labelled and accompanied by a Council Data Information sheet, so that the VEC has the information needed to read and process the council data. If your system produces these details automatically, there is no need to transcribe the information, just include the output with your data file. Please supply the record layout for the data if different to the standard format.

Please do not send unidentified files as the resultant delays could jeopardise Municipal Voters Roll production.

The format on the next page is a guide to the required data. The VEC can cope with different data formats and would rather do this than lose any data. Standard formats have been established for each software supplier, to which councils are expected to adhere.

- The most important principle in extracting the CEO list is that no information is lost in the export process. Provide the fields as you store them in preference to truncating or concatenating fields to fit the following format. The VEC would rather deal with a different format than with missing data.
- Please do NOT open an extracted file in Excel or Access before sending it to us; both are liable to corrupt data in quite complex ways which can be very difficult to detect. Make a copy of the file if you want to do any checking but send us the untouched original file.
- No data should be truncated.
- A delimited file is preferred, using the pipe symbol | or TAB rather than comma (commas can appear in data fields). Records may also be fixed-length and fixed-format.
- Variations to this format may be negotiated, as long as all the necessary fields are provided in full.
- Separate ward files are not required; it is preferable that only one file is provided with the ward code on each record.
- A voter should not appear more than once, however many properties they own.
- All data provided to the VEC should be uploaded to DEx, the VEC's secure data server. This secure data server conforms to current security standards. The server is optimised for large data sets and will eliminate delays caused by email security filters and reduce the risk of a privacy breach. If you have any questions about DEx, please contact the VEC's Enrolment Capability Team.

FIELDS REQUIRED (mandatory fields are marked \*, others may be blank)

Field	Comments	
<b>Municipality ID *</b>	Mandatory 3-character text field e.g. 522 allocated by the VEC.	
<b>Ward ID *</b>	Mandatory 2-character text field e.g. 03.	
<b>Person ID *</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council and allow efficient processing of "Update Files"	
<b>Surname *</b>	e.g. van der Walt	
<b>Given Names *</b>	e.g. Paul Andrew William	
<b>Gender</b>	M or F or leave blank	
<b>Birth Date</b>	Date format DD/MM/YYYY Councils should have DOB on at least 90% of records	
<b>Property ID *</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council and allow efficient processing of "Update Files"	
<b>Capital Improved Value *</b>	Numeric – whole \$ value (no commas). DO NOT include comma separators. 0 if not rated. To allow decisions on duplicates.	
<b>Property Name</b>	Where a property requires more than the street address to identify it, for example a caravan park, hospital name or a country property. E.g. Kadina Caravan Park, Bellbird Hospital, Killara, Westfield Retirement Village	
<b>Address Number</b>	Unit 4 or Flat 18 or RMB 7654 etc	
<b>Street Number</b>		237A
<b>Street Name</b>		Oxford or address string if separate fields are not available Unit 4/237A Oxford St
<b>Street Type</b>		Street
<b>Place Name *</b>		Mandatory – no parish names
<b>Post Code</b>	TEXT field, not numeric	
<b>Contact Address Line1</b>	Used for mailing ballot papers and voter cards as well as for duplicate matching Where 3 addresses are stored, Residential Address is more useful in these fields than Contact Address	
<b>Contact Address Line2</b>		
<b>Contact Address Line3</b>		
<b>Contact Address Line4</b>		
<b>Contact Address Line5</b>		
<b>Nominated property</b>	Y/N Flag - indicates owner wants voting entitlement based on this property	
<b>Silent *</b>	Y/N Flag - indicates council has accepted request for address not to be shown on roll. Addresses must still be provided for matching purposes.	
<b>VICMAP identifier</b>	Use Property_PFI from Land Victoria's Physical Data Model - Vicmap Property (Standard) or leave blank if not available	
<b>Voter Status Code *</b>	Indicates legislative basis for this voting entitlement (single character – see below)	
<b>Change type *</b>	L for CEO List.	

A more detailed explanation of these fields appears on the following two pages.

<b>Municipality ID</b>	The ID allocated by the Victorian Electoral Commission for this municipality/local council.
<b>Ward ID</b>	The ID allocated to the ward in which this voter is entitled to vote. (The Municipality ID and Ward ID together comprise the 5 digit 'LGA Id', which uniquely identifies the ward within the state.)
<b>Person ID</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council, duplicate identification and efficient processing of "Update" files.
<b>Surname Given Names</b>	Surname and Given Names should be provided separately, so names can be appropriately presented for mailouts and on the scannable roll.
<b>Gender</b>	M or F or blank if unknown. Do not use U for unknown.
<b>Birth Date</b>	Date format DD/MM/YYYY Leave blank if not available. Council should have date of birth on at least 80% of their records.

The following address fields make up the ENTITLEMENT ADDRESS, the basis on which the voter is included on the Roll.

<b>Property ID</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council, duplicate identification and efficient processing of "Update" files.	
<b>Capital Improved Value</b>	Numeric – whole \$ value only. DO NOT include comma separators. 0 if not rated. Facilitates decisions on duplicates.	
<b>Property Name</b>	Where a property requires more than the street address to identify it, for example a caravan park, hospital name or a country property.	
<b>Address Number</b>		Unit 4 or Flat 18 or RMB 7654 etc
<b>Street Number</b>		237 or address string, if separate fields are not available
<b>Street Name</b>		Oxford e.g. Unit 4/237 Oxford St or RMB 1419 Western Highway
<b>Street Type</b>		Street Include flat/lot/RMB details
<b>Place Name</b>	The name of the City/Suburb/Town/Locality. These should be gazetted place names; parish names are NOT acceptable.	
<b>Post Code</b>	The Postcode of the Entitlement Address. Postcodes should always be treated as text.	

The next set of address lines relate to the contact address. This must be different from the entitlement address or the record should be omitted as a resident owner (except applicants).

If you store the contact address as one free format field, please supply it in the same way regardless of size, do not split it into fields and do not truncate it.

This is the address used for mailing voter cards, information brochures and ballot papers. If your system stores Residential Address as well as Contact Address, extract the Residential Address for preference as this will give better matching in the duplicate identification process and is generally more satisfactory for mailing ballot papers. Real estate agent addresses are highly undesirable as ballot papers should not fall into the wrong hands.

**Contact Address Line1**

**Contact Address Line2**

**Contact Address Line3**

**Contact Address Line4**

**Contact Address Line5** Postcodes should always be treated as text to prevent errors such as Northern Territory postcodes appearing as 827 instead of 0827

**Nominated Property** Y/N Flag - Y indicates that this multiple property owner wants their voting entitlement based on this property rather than others they own.

**Silent** Y/N Flag indicates council has accepted request for address not to be shown on roll. Addresses must still be provided for matching purposes.

**VICMAP identifier** Use Property\_PFI from Land Victoria’s Physical Data Model - Vicmap Property (Standard) or leave blank if not available. This field will assist with Representation Reviews in the future.

**Voter Status Code** This field should contain the code used by the council to indicate the voter’s category of entitlement, i.e. Non-resident owner, company appointee etc. A list of the council codes used, and their descriptions must be provided on the Council Data Information Sheet, otherwise we have to guess which of the following codes your voters belong to.

Council codes will be standardised by conversion to one of the following to be displayed on the printed roll:

- N** – Non-Resident Owner - automatic entitlement
- A** - Resident Owner (not on EC list) application
- P** - Occupier ratepayer application
- O** - Corporation (owner) application (does not expire)
- T** - Corporation (occupier) application

**Change Type** L for CEO list.

The Council Data Information Sheet on the following page should be provided every time you send data to the Victorian Electoral Commission. Record counts and Voter Status Codes enable us to verify that we have correctly read the data. Ward numbers and names are needed to check the mapping we use.



## Appendix 5:

### Communication plan

Communication and education services and products provided to council.

#### Advertising and publicity

##### Statutory advertising campaign

- Development of advertisements for all election phases – notice of election, voting details and declaration of results
- Placement and monitoring of all advertisements created.

##### Statewide advertising campaign

- Development of statewide advertising campaign
- Placement and monitoring of statewide advertising campaign in English and multi-language media
- VoterAlert
- Voting Reminder advertisement – creation and placement

#### Publicity

- Media releases developed to accompany each phase of the advertising campaign
- Handling all media enquiries regarding election activities
- Proofing of council's election-related information for newsletters, websites (created by council)

#### Public enquiries

- Handling all public enquiries
- Provision of an overflow call centre
- Provision of translated election material and interpreter service

- Responding to all email enquiries
- Website information

#### Accessibility

- Availability of Braille/large print ballot papers
- Mailout to Vision Australia/Blind Citizens Australia database re availability of above
- Provision of National Relay Service for hearing impaired electors
- Free ReadSpeaker software to read webpages via the VEC website
- Translated information published to the VEC website

#### Education

- Schools and community groups
- Enrolment sessions in homelessness agencies, prisons (where applicable) and Aboriginal community services.
- Distribution of tailored community sector election information kits
- Email blasts to community sector groups – particularly for traditionally underrepresented groups in the electoral process i.e. disability, homeless, young people, CALD, Aboriginal
- Special voting services within homelessness agencies

#### Products

- Uncontested leaflet
- Reference information and election office contact details for council staff
- Easy English Guide to Council Elections publication – no cost to council

## Appendix 6:

### Community engagement and education

The following table summarises community engagement and education program offered by the VEC at local government elections. The VEC will work with the South Gippsland Shire Council to see which may apply to the election.

#### Community engagement and education program

##### Education and information sessions

Electoral education sessions provided to target groups traditionally under-represented in the electoral process. Participants will be encouraged to enrol and vote. The focus of education sessions will be the importance of voting in the local government elections, with an emphasis on how to vote correctly. Particular emphasis will be placed on areas with higher unintentional informality and low voter turnout.

##### Enrolment and voting outreach

Special enrolment and voting support sessions will be conducted in homelessness agencies, prisons and within Aboriginal community services.

##### Information kit

Tailored Community Sector Information Kits to be distributed to community-based organisations who work with groups traditionally under-represented in the electoral process. The kit will contain resources and services tailored to particular communities to support their enrolment and voting in the local government elections. The kit will include an Easy-English version.

##### Passport to Democracy resources

As part of the Passport to Democracy program, resources will be produced that aim to increase students understanding of the local government, in particular how students can take action on local community issues. Election specific activities such as special information sessions and special voting services in homelessness agencies, an email newsletter for the community sector and briefing sessions will be offered to Statewide networks relating to target audiences.

##### Youth Engagement Pilot

A pilot youth engagement project to increase awareness of the value and importance of voting in local government elections in areas with higher proportion of young people. Project to utilise a co-design process so young people are engaged with piloting new strategies and solutions to the engagement of young people in local government elections.

will be removed in print and web

