

2018 State Election

Your vote will help shape Victoria



State Election Service Plan

October 2018

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FOREWORD



On 24 November 2018, over 4.2 million eligible Victorians will be required to cast their vote to elect the 59th Victorian Parliament. The Victorian State election is a significant democratic event where electors will make decisions about who represents them in 88 Legislative Assembly districts and eight Legislative Council regions.

As the responsible agency, the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) will manage every element of the election which, under a strict statutory regime, requires forward planning, strong project management, attention to detail and discipline. Further, this State election will consume considerable financial, logistical, human and administrative resources, and the VEC must exercise fiscal responsibility without compromising integrity or service delivery standards. This will be managed with due consideration given to growth in the population of about 400,000 electors since 2014, and the need to expand election services accordingly.

As expected in such a high profile public event, all the VEC's activities must withstand the

closest scrutiny. Actions and decisions taken need to be transparent and compliant so that public confidence in the VEC's ability to deliver an impartial, fair, accurate and timely election result is maintained. Importantly, changes in electors' voting behaviour must be considered, particularly the growth in the number of electors choosing to vote early.

The comprehensive nature of this plan can give the public confidence and reassurance about the VEC's transparency and its capability in delivering the 2018 State election. Election objectives, priorities, initiatives, performance measures and action plans are among many of the matters covered and to which staff effort will be focussed. Importantly, this election plan will provide a basis upon which the VEC's performance can be assessed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Warwick Gately". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

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.

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INTRODUCTION

An event the size of a State election requires considerable planning, extensive preparation and co-ordination. Rightly, the voting experience of each elector should be positive and the VEC's efforts in providing that voting opportunity, largely invisible.

This Election Service Plan works to that end. It is a keystone document, directing the VEC's planning and preparation for the 2018 State election and allowing project co-ordination to occur.

The plan also provides all election participants with early advice on how the 2018 State election will be delivered—allowing an opportunity for these stakeholders to review the 'game plan' and develop their plans and responses accordingly.

This also extends to the many employees, appointees, contractors and service providers on which the VEC relies. Their understanding of the election and their place and importance in the event is critical to the successful outcome and high quality of service available to electors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The 2018 State election will be conducted recognising established and accepted principles. The VEC will:

- follow State electoral law, and apply it impartially and equitably with all participants in the process treated fairly and justly
- perform all tasks in a non-partisan and politically neutral manner to the highest standard of accuracy
- work to provide every elector with a quality and convenient service in which to exercise their democratic rights.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Victoria has two Houses of Parliament. The Legislative Assembly, or lower house, comprises 88 electoral districts; each district is represented by one member for a four-year term. The Legislative Council, or upper house, comprises eight regions, each represented by five members for a four-year term. There are 11 districts in each region.

The Victorian State election will be held on Saturday 24 November 2018.

The VEC is responsible for the conduct of all Victorian State elections. The VEC's State election operations are governed by four main pieces of legislation:

- *Electoral Act 2002*: establishes the VEC as an independent statutory authority, and sets out the processes for State elections including the timeframe for the conduct of the election.
- *Constitution Act 1975*: sets out who is entitled to enrol as an elector, who is entitled to be elected to Parliament, and the size and term of Parliament.
- *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act 1982*: governs the determination of State electoral boundaries. Under this legislation the Electoral Commissioner is nominated as a member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.
- *Infringements Act 2006*: provides for stages two, three and four of compulsory voting enforcement.

All procedures and processes implemented by the VEC during a State election take each piece of legislation into consideration and implement rules prescribed therein.

PRIVACY

The VEC is obligated by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* as well as other laws that impose specific obligations in regard to handling personal information. The VEC privacy policy provides guidance to VEC officers. All privacy concerns will be directed to the relevant officer.

INTENT

Victorians with an eligibility to vote will do so at an election that is:

- fully compliant with State law
- transparent
- fair and accurate
- delivered with efficiency, enthusiasm and to the highest standards.

This intent, while event-specific, is aligned with the VEC's vision and purpose: *'All Victorians actively participating in their democracy'*. This single intent will be the premise for all State election plans and projects. It will assist decision-making, actions and the priorities associated with the allocation of resources.

In meeting this intent, the following major operational objectives were identified:

- complete all election preparation projects by 30 September 2018
- ensure that as many eligible Victorians as possible are correctly enrolled by the close of roll on Tuesday 6 November 2018
- increase public awareness and knowledge of the election process and the various participation methods
- provide every eligible elector with a voting experience that is:
 - convenient and easy to access
 - timely to their requirements
 - easy to understand
 - respectful and courteous, and
 - confidential

- assist candidates, Registered Political Parties and other participants to meet nomination and other compliance requirements and participate effectively in the election
- provide electoral information, including results, to all stakeholders in a format that is easy to 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.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

In order to evaluate the overall success of the election and to determine whether the VEC's intent has been met, key performance indicators have been adopted. By utilising a set of indicators, the VEC's performance can be assessed, and future performance improvements identified. The following key performance indicators have been adopted for the 2018 State election.

Election Preparation		
Objective: Sufficient, fully resourced and accessible voting centres will be available during the voting period.		
Indicator	Measure	Target
Number of voting centre venues booked and assessed by 1 August 2018	Proportion of total	85%
Number of voting centres fully resourced no less than 48 hours before operating date	Proportion of total	100%
Number of independent wheelchair accessible (IWA) venues	Proportion of total	25%*
Number of election day officials completing online training	Proportion of total	90%
Number of early voting centres open and ready to operate from Monday 12 November 2018	Proportion of total	100%
Number of electoral district rolls produced and available for distribution within eight days of roll close (by 14 November 2018)	Proportion of total	100%

* VEC aims to achieve this target, however the VEC does not own the venues used during election.

Election Conduct		
Objective: The election will be conducted to a high standard within legislated and organisational timeframes.		
Indicator	Measure	Target
Turnaround time for postal vote application processing from close of nominations	Proportion processed on day of receipt	100%
Percentage of Legislative Assembly first preference vote counts received from voting centres within two hours of close of voting (i.e. by 8.00 pm)	Ordinary votes counted and entered into election management system by 8.00 pm	75%
Percentage of own district early votes counted on election night	Own district early votes counted and entered into election management system on election night	90%
Percentage of total Legislative Assembly votes which were counted to first	Proportion of total votes for the election, counted on election	75%

preferences on election weekend	weekend	
Percentage of Legislative Assembly postal votes returned to central processing centre at the close of voting that were counted on election weekend	Proportion of postal votes received that are counted on election weekend	90%
Number of preliminary two candidate preferred selections that were correct based on the official election results	Percentage of the district selections that were correct	95%
Number of complaints or election enquiries responded to or acknowledged within five working days	Proportion of total	90%
Overall level of voter satisfaction (aggregate across voter types – includes CALD, early, postal, overseas and ordinary/absent voters)	Proportion of total surveyed	93%
Return of writs by date specified	Date returned	On or before 15 December 2018
Number of legal challenges to VEC conduct upheld	Number	0

Election Outcomes

Objective: Eligible electors will be enrolled and cast a formal vote, or provide a valid and sufficient reason for failing to vote.

Indicator	Measure	Target
The number of eligible electors enrolled at close of roll	Proportion of eligible electors enrolled	≥1% National average
Percentage of Legislative Assembly votes counted as a proportion of total electors at the close of roll	Votes counted as a proportion of the total electors enrolled at close of roll	93%
Informality Rate - Legislative Assembly (LH)	Proportion of votes counted	≤5.22% *
Informality Rate - Legislative Council (UH)	Proportion of votes counted	3.30% *

*The VEC aims for these targets but notes many factors outside their control contribute to this total.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION

ELECTION TIMELINE

The Victorian State election timeline is set in legislation. Barring exceptional circumstances, State elections are held on the last Saturday in November, every four years.

The trigger for a State election is the issue of the writs that occurs 25 days before election day. The writs for a State election must be returned no later than 21 days after election day. Therefore, the timeframe for the conduct of a State election is 46 days.

Given this short timeframe it is essential that planning and preparation commences well in advance of the election. The lead-time for the management of the 2018 State election is estimated to be 12 – 16 months. All major projects will be in place by Sunday 30 September 2018, well in advance of the issue of the writs.

The timeline for the 2018 election, based on the writs being issued on Tuesday 30 October 2018, is included in Appendix 1.

A summary of key milestones during the VEC's election preparation is included in Appendix 3.

SERVICE PLAN

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The VEC plans to implement a number of initiatives for the 2018 election. These are summarised as follows and further detail is provided later in the document:

- Optimised design of website for mobile devices
- Improved design of ballot papers
- Improved candidate products and services
- Voters Voice app for State elections
- VoterAlert SMS and email notification service
- Assisted hearing devices in every early voting centre and with mobile voting teams
- Pilot program working with two disability support organisations to promote the right to vote and supports available for electors with intellectual impairment
- Democracy Ambassadors providing enrolment and education outreach sessions for voters experiencing barriers
- A new counting model designed to ensure that the majority of Legislative Assembly votes are counted on election night.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The VEC is committed to managing resources in a way that minimises environmental impact across operations.

For some time, the VEC has been effecting environmentally sustainable changes in its practices, and these have been reflected in its operations. The VEC has recently upgraded the multifunction devices that are deployed to election offices. The new units were selected for the improved features they offer, and also for their impressive environmental credentials. From the use of recycled plastic in their construction (36% by weight) and their reduced

power consumption (5%), to the plant-based toner which requires less energy to produce (30%), the new devices have a significantly reduced carbon footprint. These devices will only be used to produce information of a temporary nature, and the new approach still meets information quality and presentation requirements.

Other examples of environmentally sustainable strategies that deliver co-benefits of efficiency and cost savings include:

- the provision of re-use and recycling facilities at VEC head office and all election offices for the 2018 State election
- electronic device sharing arrangements with other states and territories in the conduct of elections (up to 1,000 laptops and other devices)
- encouraging the return of how-to-vote material to party workers at each voting centre
- clearly labelled recycling bins available at each voting centre
- careful consideration and planning of more environmentally sustainable transportation for election materials across the State to reduce logistics per kilogram kilometres
- paper reduction strategies (such as reducing paper sent to election offices for election use, moving instruction manuals to an online format, and the provision of electronic copies of reports where possible).

The VEC values and promotes knowledge, learning and collaboration; it actively works to empower and engage staff and the community in decisions of importance to all, and will continue to promote sustainable practices during the 2018 State election.

ENROLMENT AND CLOSE OF ROLLS

OVERVIEW

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.

PRE-ELECTION ROLL PRODUCTS

The register of electors will be updated with all enrolment updates as at the close of business on Wednesday 3 October 2018. Shortly after this date, the final monthly roll products prior to the close of roll will be produced for Registered Political Parties to allow them to check that endorsed candidates are correctly enrolled.

Members of Parliament will also be provided with their final monthly roll products at this time.

ENROLMENT ELIGIBILITY CHECKS

Nominations open from 9.00 am on Wednesday 31 October 2018, the day following the issue of the writ. The VEC will check that nominating candidates are enrolled on the Victorian register of electors and that their nominators (where applicable) are enrolled in the electorate in which the candidate has nominated.

CLOSE OF ROLL

The roll for the election closes at 8.00 pm on Tuesday 6 November 2018 (seven days after the issue of the writ). All election offices and AEC Divisional Offices will remain open until 8.00 pm on Tuesday 6 November.

The VEC has worked closely with the AEC to ensure that enrolment data received by the close of roll is processed by the AEC within 24 hours.

All electors who enrol or update their details in the weeks following the close of roll will be contacted by mail and advised of the appropriate action. Where applicable, electors will be advised they may attend a voting centre and complete an 'Application for Enrolment/Provisional Vote'.

ELECTION ROLL PRODUCTS

Roll product generation for the election will commence as soon as final roll update processing has been completed, to allow printing of scannable and reference rolls and production of other roll products.

Registered Political Party rolls, and candidate rolls, for the electorates in which they have nominated, will also be generated and provided. Candidates will be reminded of the restrictions on the use of roll data and their obligation to destroy roll data after the declaration of the results.

PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE

The VEC will establish a call centre to deal effectively and efficiently with the large volume of calls and emails received during a State election.

The operation period for the call centre will be as follows:

Date	Operating hours
Weekdays Monday 24 September to Friday 9 November	8.30 am to 5.00 pm
Tuesday, 6 November (close of roll – Melbourne Cup Day)	8.30 am to 8.00 pm
Weekdays Monday 12 to Friday 23 November	8.30 am to 6.00 pm
Saturday 17 November	9.00 am to 5.00 pm
Thursday 22 November (extended hours)	8.30 am to 8.00 pm
Saturday 24 November	8.00 am to 6.00 pm
Monday 26 to Tuesday 27 November	8.30 am to 5.00 pm

Outside the call centre hours of operation, a recorded service will be available that provides information on enrolment and voting.

For the hearing impaired, the VEC will promote the National Relay Service (for those who may have used a teletypewriter or text-phone in the past), as well as fax and email contact.

MULTI-LANGUAGE TELEPHONE INTERPRETING SERVICE

A telephone interpreting and multi-language information service operated by the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS) will be available during the election. Interpreting services will be available in more than 100 languages with a minimum of 20 dedicated telephone numbers provided for the most widely spoken languages in Victoria, plus English. See Appendix 6.

WEBSITE

The VEC website will feature comprehensive State election-specific information, updated at each phase of the election cycle. Information will include:

- enrolment
- registering to work at the election
- nominating, how-to-vote cards and group voting tickets
- early and postal voting
- details of how, when and where to vote on election day
- voting options for electors interstate or overseas
- election results

Information will also be available in Easy English.

Translated information in 19 languages will be available on individual language pages. Translated enrolment forms will also be available on each of those pages that convert the text to English when printed.

From 6.00 pm on election night progressive results information will be available on the VEC website. Results information will continue to be published in the weeks following election night.

The VEC will direct electors to the website by promoting the address in all television, print, online and radio advertisements, on social media and in any supplementary promotional material produced.

A number of election-specific publications will also be made available on the site.

VOTER ALERT NOTIFICATION SERVICE

The VEC will offer expanded digital communication services for the election, which will provide options for electors to receive important electoral information and notifications. The service will give electors the chance to provide a mobile phone number and or an email address to receive election notifications.

INTERACTIVE MAP

The VEC's interactive map, which is searchable by address, street name and locality, will provide detailed voting centre, early voting centre and election office information via the VEC's website. The map will show voting centres nearest to any search result, and will provide information about the facilities at the voting centres, including wheelchair accessibility. The interactive map will be available from Wednesday 31 October 2018.

INFO@VEC.VIC.GOV.AU

People who prefer to contact the VEC online will be presented with a wide range of online help topics; if none of these successfully address their enquiry they will have the option of contacting the VEC via the email address info@vec.vic.gov.au

The VEC's public enquiry service will address and respond to emails sent to info@vec.vic.gov.au and any more difficult questions will be followed-up by dedicated VEC officers.

ENROLMENT, NOMINATION, POSTAL VOTE AND RECRUITMENT APPLICATIONS

To make participating in the 2018 State election as easy as possible, the VEC website will have a series of 'helper' tools that guide users through the process of enrolling, nominating, applying to vote, or registering to work at the election.

Where legislation permits, it will be possible to complete and submit these forms entirely online. In other cases, the tools will produce a pre-populated form that the user can print and return via post, email or in person.

INFORMATION FOR ELECTORS OVERSEAS

The VEC will provide information about the State election to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the SmartTraveller website. A link to the VEC's online information on voting while overseas will also be included.

The VEC aims to provide accessible election information outside Australia to encourage participation by eligible electors at the State election.

ELECTION GUIDE

An election guide will be sent to all Victorian households where a registered elector resides. The guide will include information about the election, voting options, as well as specific voting centre details. Also included will be instructions on how to correctly complete the ballot papers.

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

The VEC will run an updated version of its 'paper people' State election advertising campaign, which will drive broad public awareness amongst Victoria's electors about participating in the 2018 State election. The 2018 campaign will focus on motivating Victorian electors, and will again use the '*Your vote will help shape Victoria*' tag line.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The VEC will use social media platforms to convey key electoral information through rich media content, including video and motivational messages throughout the election period.

In addition to promoting key electoral messages, the VEC will be receptive to other social media users' questions and will monitor and respond to issues should they arise.

VOTERS VOICE

Voters Voice is a free app for mobiles and tablets, designed to assist electors with complex communication difficulties to participate in Victorian elections; specifically voting in person at a voting centre. The application includes text-to-voice software customised for use with election terminology.

The application functions include the ability to 'speak' or 'show' pre-filled name and address information, as well as key voting phrases. It also provides a keyboard for those with a higher level of literacy skill. The app is also appropriate for electors with limited or insufficient English language or literacy and those who use Auslan. A voting centre locator feature is also included. The application is now available in the iTunes store and via Google Play.

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES PROGRAM

The VEC has extensive education and inclusion services to support enrolment and voting across the broad spectrum of eligible Victorians. The VEC's Education and Inclusion program also forms part of the VEC's Disability Action Plan 2016-2019 and Reconciliation Action Plan 2017-2019.

The VEC continues to work closely with its community advisory groups: Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG), which represents a number of varied disability agencies and individuals; Homelessness Advisory Group and CALD Advisory Group. Each of these groups is

involved in the co-design of the VEC's education outreach initiatives.

A number of programs currently in place are detailed below along with the services provided.

DEMOCRACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Due to the success of the VEC's pilot Democracy Ambassador program¹, it will be expanded in 2018 to include the priority communities outlined in the VEC's Community Education and Inclusion Strategy 2016-2019. Young people outside of formal education, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and people experiencing homelessness will be the primary focus of the VEC's outreach efforts. The program will include the training and support of a State-wide team of peer leaders to deliver electoral information and enrolment outreach to areas across Victoria identified as having lower levels of electoral participation.

YOUTH ENROLMENT AND VOTING

A key focus of the 2018 advertising campaign will be the engagement of young people to enrol and vote. The campaign will use digital and social media platforms to encourage and inform eligible Victorians new to voting.

PASSPORT TO DEMOCRACY

This in-school program will continue to be available, providing students with a positive experience of democracy within the classroom. An additional election-specific module will be available in 2018 to involve students more closely in the election.

In order to better support community organisations in providing up-to-date electoral information to their clients or service users online education resources will be developed.

¹ A peer education-based program delivered with Horn of Africa communities in the lead up to the 2014 State election

SERVICES TO THE HOMELESS

Enrolment sessions will be available for homeless support agencies and crisis accommodation centres. In addition, during the early voting period mobile voting facilities will be established in a number of homeless support agencies.

OVER 70s

Senior citizen groups will be provided with information regarding voting obligations, as well as information on early voting options, becoming a general postal voter (GPV) and accessing the relevant forms.

PRISONER ENGAGEMENT

In partnership with Corrections Victoria, information on the election and a mobile voting pilot will be delivered in prisons via the VEC's Electoral Engagement for People in Prisons pilot project.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

It is vital the VEC is able to demonstrate the impact of activities aimed at improving participation for those traditionally under-represented in the electoral system. The VEC's Education and Inclusion strategy (2016-2019) provides a proactive response to program evaluation by identifying a number of overall key performance indicators (KPIs). Sitting under these KPIs are individual project targets for election-period initiatives. The following are the election-related participation and inclusion targets:

- 1) 40 Democracy Ambassadors are recruited and trained from the VEC's priority community groups (disability, homeless, culturally and linguistically diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, young people) to deliver electoral information and enrolment sessions.
- 2) Democracy Ambassadors deliver sessions to reach 7,500 people in the lead up to the State Election.
- 3) Of the people reached, at least 70% report an improvement in knowledge of how to fill out a ballot paper correctly, knowing about the support available to vote, and making an

informed decision about how to find out who to vote for.

- 4) There is an increase in no-fixed address enrolment for people who are homeless and specialist early mobile voting is delivered to a minimum of 20 sites.

SENIOR ELECTION OFFICIALS

RECRUITMENT

During June to August 2017, the VEC undertook a recruitment program for Senior Election Officials (SEOs) to ensure coverage of staff for key management roles in all State election areas.

ORIENTATION TRAINING

Orientation training for all newly-recruited SEOs occurred during October-November 2017 and comprised face-to-face seminars and home study (including online) activities.

Orientation training is designed to prepare new SEOs to the stage where they can effectively join SEOs that are more experienced in further training, and to allow assessment of their potential for appointment as an Election Manager (EM) or Assistant Election Manager (AEM). The selection of SEOs for appointment to the roles of EM or AEM occurs after the completion of orientation training.

TRAINING FOR ELECTION MANAGERS (EM) AND ASSISTANT ELECTION MANAGERS (AEM)

Training for EMs and AEMs took place in August 2018 and included face-to-face training and associated home study activities. An additional three days of systems training will take place within election offices in October 2018. The VEC ensures a number of SEOs are in reserve who have been trained, and are ready to step in to any last-minute management vacancies.

All EMs and AEMs will have satisfactorily completed at least nine days of training prior to the State election. The training includes significant practical components and covers all aspects of the role, including:

- recruitment and training of staff

- processing of nominations and how-to-vote cards
- managing voting and assisting voters
- management of ballot papers and
- conducting counts.
- In addition, by the time the election commences at least 18 hours of home study will have been completed.

A final one-day briefing for EMs will be held on Wednesday 24 October 2018.

ELECTION OFFICE AND STAFF

ELECTION MANAGER, ASSISTANT ELECTION MANAGER AND STAFF

The Electoral Commissioner has appointed 88 EMs to conduct elections for the 88 districts. All district EMs will accept nominations and how-to-vote cards for registration from independent region candidates. District EMs will also be responsible for region primary counts. Two region EMs will be appointed with overall responsibility for the eight regions and to manage region election officials and oversee the centralised region computer counts. The region election officials will be responsible for the conduct of region rechecks and the movement of below-the-line ballot papers to the computer count centres.

Each EM will be assisted by at least one AEM.

The EM will appoint and train an optimum number of staff to ensure the efficient conduct of their election. These will include staff to work in the election office, in early voting centres and in election day voting centres.

The VEC will work with appropriate partners to encourage and facilitate the appointment of election officials from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those with multi-language skills, people aged 18-25 years old, and those with a disability.

ELECTION OFFICE

The VEC has finalised the leasing of the 88 election offices and has endeavoured to source offices located in a convenient position for both candidates and electors, with appropriate access for electors with a disability. Election offices will be clearly identified with signage and will have appropriate security.

The election office provides facilities for EMs to meet with candidates and/or their representatives, to provide a counter service to

members of the public, and to accommodate the scrutiny and count of votes etc.

Six-month leases have been negotiated that allowed for IT infrastructure, telecommunication services and utilities to be established well in advance of the election. Election offices will be open to the public from Tuesday 30 October.

Each election office has been supplied with all equipment, stationery and materials necessary for the conduct of the election. Recycling bins for use during office operations have also been provided.

Election offices will access the VEC's election management system, an IT application specifically developed to support the conduct of the election. The election management system contains details of each district and region, and access to the roll of electors. Nominations and results are all entered directly into the application. Additionally the roll for the election is loaded into the application and is used to mark electors as being issued with a vote. Using the system, the VEC is able to produce the artwork for printing ballot papers and other products required for the election, and to publish information directly onto the VEC's website.

The VEC will arrange the collection of materials and equipment from all election offices between Monday 17 December 2018 and Friday 25 January 2019. Paper and cardboard products unable to be reused will be collected and recycled.

OFFICE HOURS

Election offices will open to the public from Tuesday 30 October and will close at 6.00 pm on Saturday 24 November 2018.

All election offices will operate on standard hours from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to

Friday from Tuesday 30 October until Friday 9 November.

Extended hours will apply on Tuesday 6 November (close of roll), from 9.00 am to 8.00 pm, to receive enrolments.

Extended hours will also apply during the early voting period, as follows:

- Monday 12 November - 9.00 am to 6.00 pm
- Tuesday 13 November – Friday 23 November - 8.30 am to 6.00 pm weekdays (except for Thursday 22 November when hours will be further extended until 8.00 pm); and
- Saturday 17 November - 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

Election offices will only be open for public enquiries on election day, Saturday 24 November, from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

This arrangement will assist in providing consistent messages to electors via the VEC's advertising and communication campaign, meet all legislative requirements, and provide candidates and voters with adequate access to services for the election.

SUPPORT FOR ELECTION MANAGERS

ELECTION SUPPORT OFFICERS (ESOs)

ESOs will provide support to EMs throughout the election. Located at the VEC's Melbourne office, the ESOs will be the central point of contact between the EMs, the Electoral Commissioner and other VEC staff. They will assist EMs with procedural and other issues. Field ESOs will be available for additional support within election offices as required.

details, access pay advices and accept any offers of appointment

- complete timesheets
- understand the political disclosure requirements
- complete online training and
- resolve pay-related queries.

HELP DESK

The VEC will establish a Help Desk to provide frontline support to election offices, as well as to other appointees in the field (such as Early Voting Centre Managers and Voting Centre Managers). Principally, the Help Desk undertakes quality assurance checks of the VEC's IT infrastructure prior to the opening of election offices and provides system support to users of the VEC's election management system. It also forwards any procedural questions to the relevant ESO.

ELECTION LIAISON OFFICERS (ELOs)

EMs will appoint ELOs who will visit voting centres on election day. The ELO's role will be to alert the EM to instances where voting centres may need extra resources and deliver them where appropriate, and to ensure procedures are applied consistently.

PERSONNEL HELPLINE

The personnel helpline provides telephone and email support to election staff in the use of the VEC's personnel systems, and assists them to:

- complete their online registration for appointment (potential new staff)
- access and navigate the election staff self-service portal to update contact details, enter banking, tax and superannuation

CANDIDATE SERVICES

REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTY (RPP) – BRIEFING SESSIONS

During 2018, the VEC has conducted a number of briefing sessions for registered political parties on the election process, new Funding and Disclosure laws and other requirements of the *Electoral Act 2002*. The briefings provided information on:

- the VEC's preparations for the election
- infrastructure arrangements
- enrolment and roll products
- changes to legislation
- the role of district and region Election Managers
- postal voting arrangements
- nomination procedures
- the registration of how-to-vote cards and group voting tickets
- the VEC's information campaign and
- the complaints procedure.

Information sessions specifically addressing funding and disclosure requirements were held during August.

Support documentation, including voting centre lists and election office details and data relating to postal voting (where requested) will be made available to RPPs.

During the election period, the VEC will publish regular circulars for RPPs and region candidates. District EMs will keep their district candidates informed of specific election activities and timelines.

INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE INFORMATION SESSION

An information session for independent candidates will take place at the VEC on Sunday 28 October at 2.00 pm. The

information session will cover key timelines and procedures relevant to independent candidates.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations open from Wednesday 31 October. The VEC has produced information for prospective candidates that includes candidate and scrutineer handbooks and all forms required for nominating at a State election, as well as information specific to the electorate for which they are nominating. Candidate information is available on the VEC website and is available for EMs.

Nominations from RPPs must be lodged at the VEC. EMs will receive and record nominations from independent candidates, including the receipt of the \$350 nomination deposit. Independent region candidates will be able to lodge their nomination with any district EM within the region in which they are nominating.

An application is available for RPPs to record their nominations. The application will allow RPPs to complete district and region nomination forms and forward them to preselected candidates for signature before lodging at the VEC.

Nomination information captured electronically will be uploaded into the VEC's election management system and will be checked against the signed, hardcopy nomination forms. Independent candidates will be able to complete their nomination form online, but will still need to lodge their hard copy nomination form with the EM, as required by legislation.

The EM will publish a list of all nominations received on a daily basis in a prominent position in the election office. Details of nominations that have completed a full quality assurance process will also be published on the VEC's website twice daily at approximately 10.00 am and 6.00 pm.

DRAW FOR BALLOT PAPER POSITION

Close of nominations for RPPs is 12 noon on Thursday 8 November 2018, and for independent candidates, 12 noon on Friday 9 November. District EMs will hold a ballot draw to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot paper as soon as practicable after the close of nominations (anticipated to be from 1.00 pm). One district EM within each region will have responsibility for conducting the ballot draw for the region. Refer Appendix 2 for districts responsible for region ballot draws.

Ballot draws will be conducted electronically and the order of names on each district ballot paper determined by a single random draw.

As per legislation, each region ballot draw will initiate the following three draws:

- one to determine the order of groups
- one to determine the order of candidates in a group where this has not been specified by the group and
- one to determine the order of any ungrouped candidates.

HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS

All how-to-vote cards (HTVCs) to be distributed within 400 metres of voting centres on election day, or to be carried by mobile voting teams, must be registered by the Electoral Commissioner. Independent candidates may lodge their HTVCs with EMs who will forward these to the Electoral Commissioner for registration. RPPs must lodge their HTVCs directly with the VEC. The first day for submission of HTVCs to the VEC for registration is Monday 12 November, and the final day for submission is 12 noon on Friday 16 November.

Further detail on HTVCs is available in the *Candidate Handbook*.

Applicants will be required to submit an electronic copy of each card, as well as two hard copies. The provision of electronic copies

will speed up the process of publishing all registered cards on the VEC website.

Detailed information on the requirements for HTVC card registration will be contained in the *Candidate Handbook*.

GROUP REGISTRATION AND GROUP VOTING TICKETS

Two or more candidates nominating for a region may request that their names be grouped on the ballot paper. Following their registration, each group is entitled to lodge up to three group voting tickets. A group voting ticket sets out an order of preferences for all candidates in the region election.

The *Electoral Act 2002* requires that all applications for group registration and group voting tickets be submitted at the VEC. Group registration closes at 12 noon on Thursday 8 November and group voting tickets must be lodged by 12 noon on Sunday 11 November. Where groups fail to lodge a group voting ticket, no box will be printed above-the-line on the ballot paper. Penalties apply for groups who do not lodge a group voting ticket by the deadline.

CANDIDATE ENQUIRIES

EMs will deal personally with all enquiries from candidates for their own electorate(s) to ensure that authoritative and consistent information is being provided.

RPPs will deal directly with the VEC.

FUNDING AND DISCLOSURE

New laws governing political funding and disclosure now apply in Victoria.

The laws apply to any person or organisation that gives or receives political donations. This will include caps on political donations and a requirement for donations of \$1,000 or more to be disclosed online.

While some of the obligations under these laws have already commenced, the majority will come into effect on 25 November 2018, after the State election. Further information

regarding funding and disclosure is available on the VEC's website vec.vic.gov.au

ELECTORAL ENTITLEMENTS

The *Electoral Act 2002* provides for public funding for candidates who gain at least 4% of the total number of first preference votes given in the election or who are elected. For the 2018 State election, the entitlement amount will be \$1.75 per first preference vote received.

The calculation of each entitlement will be performed after the final count of all votes has occurred for each district and region.

Before receiving public funding, registered political parties with eligible candidates and eligible independent candidates must submit an audited Statement of Expenditure in relation to the election. The audited statement must be submitted within 20 weeks of the election. If the statement specifies less than the entitlement has been spent, only the amount spent will be paid. If the statement specifies more than the entitlement has been spent, only the entitlement amount will be paid.

REFUND OF NOMINATION DEPOSITS

Candidates who are elected, and candidates or upper house groups who obtain 4% or more of the formal vote, will have their nomination deposit refunded as soon as practicable after the declaration of the election.

Nomination deposits for independent candidates will be refunded to the candidate. Nomination deposits for candidates endorsed by a RPP will be refunded directly to the party. Refunds will be made by direct credit into a nominated bank account or, where requested, by cheque.

Nomination deposits will also be refunded if a candidate retires or dies before the close of nominations or is a candidate in a failed election.

All other candidates forfeit their deposits.

BALLOT MATERIAL AND ROLL PRODUCTS

VEC employees will supervise all stages of the preparation and printing of ballot material and roll products.

Considerable time will be devoted to the recruitment and training of quality assurance staff to oversee these processes.

BALLOT PAPERS

The design of ballot papers has been improved to enhance the readability of voting instructions for electors. Artwork for ballot papers and group voting ticket booklets will be generated using the VEC's automation tool to create each product dynamically, based on nominations and group voting ticket information. This system imports relevant candidate and ticket information into the products directly from the election management system's database.

All district ballot papers will be joined to their respective region ballot paper with a perforation between each paper. In addition, the district ballot paper will be rotated 180° to the region ballot paper to prompt the issuing officer to separate the district paper from the region paper when issuing to electors. In line with new legislation, ballot papers will include registered political party logos where registered. Logos will appear next to party candidate names on district ballot papers and below the square above-the-line for region ballot papers. The district and region names will be printed on the reverse of the respective ballot papers to assist with the extraction and sort of early and postal votes.

Mail house ballot paper stock to be used for postal voting will be pre-printed with the initials of the VEC officer responsible for postal voting.

Print ready PDF files will be transmitted directly to the VEC's contracted ballot material printer, therefore requiring minimal work by the printer prior to production.

BRILLE BALLOT PAPERS

The VEC is working with Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia regarding the provision of election information in email, audio, DAISY and braille format. An initial mail-out by Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia has taken place to ensure that all Victorian voters who are blind or have low vision are provided with accessible information for the upcoming State election. Electors who are blind or have low vision will be able to register to have braille ballot material; registration will be open in September and October 2018. Braille ballot papers will be provided after the close of nominations to those who have registered. The VEC will not be offering a large print ballot material service for the State election due to production timeline constraints.

GROUP VOTING TICKET BOOKLETS

Sets of eight group voting ticket booklets (1 booklet per region) will be provided to EMs for use in the election office, early voting centres, mobile teams and election day voting centres.

Electors will be alerted to the availability of the booklets at each voting centre.

ABSENT SETS

Absent sets, containing 10 ballot papers for each district (with joined region ballot paper) will be produced. These ballot papers will be collated into the 88 districts with tabbed dividers, with a total of 880 ballot papers per set.

BLANK DISTRICT BALLOT PAPERS

The VEC will prepare sets of printed region ballot papers with adjoining blank district ballot papers, to be used for early and election day

voting, should fully printed ballot papers for a particular district become exhausted. Sets will be clearly packaged and each package will contain 10 joined ballot papers for each of the eight regions (80 ballot papers in total).

EARLY VOTING

EARLY VOTING

Electors can vote during the two weeks before election day at any early voting centre across the State. The VEC has established at least one early voting centre in each district for the 2018 State election.

Early voting will be available from Monday 12 November to Friday 23 November at each election office (with the exception of the Yan Yean District election office) and at additional early voting centres across the State, including Melbourne Airport.

Early voting will operate from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday. Extended hours will apply on Thursday 22 November until 8.00 pm. Early voting centres will also operate from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on Saturday 17 November in recognition of the needs of those members of the community who cannot vote during business hours for early voting.

Early voting at Melbourne Airport will be available on Monday 12 November between 9.00 am and 10.00 pm, Tuesday 13 November until Thursday 22 November (including Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 November) between 5.00 am and 10.00 pm and on Friday 23 November between 5.00 am and 6.00 pm.

Staff at early voting centres will be provided with electronic roll mark off facilities that will provide early voting officials with access to the full State roll (as at the close of roll).

POSTAL VOTING

An elector may apply in writing to the VEC for a postal vote from the issue of the writ (6.00 pm on Tuesday 30 October) until 6.00 pm on Wednesday 21 November. Electors may apply online for a postal vote. Electors applying online do not need to sign the postal vote application or have it witnessed; however, they will be required to

provide verification information by way of a verification question and answer. Hardcopy application forms will also be available from Australia Post offices, the VEC, election offices from Wednesday 31 October. In special circumstances, electors will also be able to receive emailed ballot material—see Central Processing Centre below for more information.

Electors registered as general postal voters for State elections will have their ballot material posted to them as soon as ballot material is available following the close of nominations.

Candidates and parties may choose to distribute postal vote applications to electors, however they are cautioned not to attach or include party badged or campaign material to postal vote applications. If the VEC receives any postal vote applications that are physically attached to, or form part of other written material not produced by the Commission, the application will be rejected.

New legislation allows for candidates and parties to request postal vote data from the VEC. Electors applying for a postal vote will be required to declare they understand this data will be provided to candidates and parties, where an elector does not complete the declaration their postal vote application will be rejected.

Candidates and parties requesting postal vote data will be required to sign a formal declaration that they will only use the data for election purposes. Restrictions apply as to what data each candidate or party can receive, also the data will not include silent electors.

CENTRAL PROCESSING CENTRE

The VEC will establish a Central Processing Centre (CPC) with responsibility for the processing of postal vote applications, dispatch of postal ballot material to voters and processing of returned postal votes.

Should RPPs undertake any large-scale distribution of postal vote applications that are not directly returned to the VEC they are required to ensure that applications they receive each day are delivered to the VEC for processing no later than 11.00 am the same day. This will ensure same day processing and dispatch of postal votes to electors.

For electors unable to access postal voting facilities (travelling interstate or overseas in remote locations with no fixed postal address), the VEC will continue to provide an emailed ballot material solution for accepting and distributing ballot material. Electors apply for a postal vote online and select the email option. Ballot material will be emailed to them at their nominated email address via a secure email dispatch service if they meet the criteria for this service. Completed ballot papers must be returned by mail as there is currently no allowance in legislation for electronic transmission.

MOBILE VOTING

The Electoral Commissioner may appoint nursing homes, hospitals, homeless support agencies, prisons and other institutions as mobile voting centres at the election. Mobile voting teams will visit these facilities in the two weeks prior to election day to enable electors that are unable to attend an early or election day voting centre to vote. To date the VEC has contacted all facilities that received a service in 2014 and new facilities since 2014 to confirm those that require a visit from a mobile voting team and those that require postal vote applications.

Election managers will contact facilities within their District during late October to establish a visitation schedule. Additionally the VEC will establish a centralised mobile voting team to provide mobile voting services to prisons and homelessness agencies. Registered political parties and candidates will be advised of mobile voting itineraries.

TELEPHONE ASSISTED VOTING

The VEC will provide Telephone Assisted Voting services during the early voting period to electors who are unable to vote without assistance because they are blind; have low vision or a motor impairment.

Telephone Assisted Voting entails a two-step process and electors are required to make two telephone calls. The first call is to register for a Telephone Assisted Vote and the second is to cast their vote.

The service will operate from the VEC head office from 9.00 am on Monday 12 November. Registration will close at 2.00 pm on Friday 23 November with voting closing at 6.00 pm on the same day.

INTERSTATE AND OVERSEAS VOTING

The VEC has established early voting facilities at 11 interstate and 34 overseas locations. Details of all locations will be available on the VEC's website at vec.vic.gov.au during the election period.

ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL SERVING OVERSEAS

The Department of Defence has advised the VEC that there are no armed forces personnel serving overseas up to and during the State election, therefore no special arrangements are needed for this election.

ANTARCTIC VOTERS

The VEC continues to work with staff from the Australian Antarctic Division to ensure that 'Antarctic electors' employed in; or travelling to or from Antarctica during the 2018 State election, are able to vote. The VEC will provide ballot papers for each registered elector via the VEC's secure data exchange (DEX). Antarctic electors can download and complete their ballot papers before uploading them back to the VEC by the same means, for inclusion in the count.

ELECTION DAY VOTING CENTRES

SELECTION OF VOTING CENTRES

In mid-2018, a review of all voting centres for the 2018 State election was completed and where necessary, replacement and additional voting centres secured. All voting centres have been booked and audited for accessibility.

In selecting the voting centres for the 2018 election, the VEC considered those voting centres used at previous State, Federal and council elections, and that are geographically well located within each district. The VEC is committed to, as far as possible, securing voting centres that can provide maximum access for voters and has attempted to ensure that there is at least one fully accessible voting centre in each district.

Accessibility ratings for all venues will be included in the Election Guide, on the VEC website and in print media.

JOINT VOTING CENTRES

A number of voting centres will be appointed as joint voting centres due to their proximity to electoral boundaries. Utilisation of joint voting centres assists in the reduction of declaration voting, which is more time consuming for electors and takes more time to process and count after election day. Information regarding joint voting centre locations will be made available to parties and candidates.

For the 2018 State election 94 joint voting centres will be appointed. Three of the joint voting centres will each serve three Districts, and 91 will each serve two Districts.

VOTING CENTRE EQUIPMENT

The VEC will arrange for the delivery of furniture (where required) and equipment to each voting centre in the three weeks before election day. This will include customised cardboard voting centre equipment (voting

screens, directional signage, ballot boxes, recycling rubbish bins etc.).

Each voting centre will be provided with at least one tablet to allow officials to access an electronic copy of the State roll for look-up purposes.

Laptops will be provided to a number of voting centres to allow electors' names to be marked directly off an electronic roll. The venues to be provided with laptop capability will be determined closer to the election.

The VEC will arrange for the collection of voting centre furniture and equipment from each voting centre in the three weeks after election day.

OPERATION OF VOTING CENTRES

Election day voting centres operate between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm on Saturday 24 November 2018. Voting Centre Managers (VCMs) will be trained in the strict legal requirement to adhere to these times and the procedures for operation of the voting centre on election day. This includes the new requirement for the display of signage outside voting centres.

VOTING CENTRE STAFF

The VEC's online registration system for prospective election officials is available on the VEC's website. Utilising data regarding staff previously appointed to work at State and local council elections, and persons registering to work for the first time, the EM will appoint the optimum staff for each voting centre to provide a smooth flow of voters on election day. The VEC has developed job specifications to assess potential candidates and ensure that Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) principles are followed in the selection of all staff.

The VEC will continue to encourage and engage staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those with disabilities, those with multilingual skills and young people (18-25) to register as prospective election officials. Additionally, the VEC will provide opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to apply for employment as election officials.

EMs will appoint as many staff as necessary to ensure voting centres are adequately resourced and that election office tasks are completed as required.

Election day staff will be provided with training tools that outline voting centre procedures, with special emphasis on integrity, accuracy and good customer service. Election officials in certain roles will be required to complete a suite of online training modules prior to election day, allowing EMs to monitor the progress and proficiency of all staff. The online training is to complement the face-to-face training sessions for VCMs, Assistant Voting Centre Managers (AVCMs), Declaration Issuing Officers (DIOs) and Election Liaison Officers (ELOs).

QUEUE MANAGEMENT

Queues both inside and outside of the voting centre will be managed to ensure electors move as quickly as possible through the voting centre to cast their vote and to ensure voters requiring assistance are provided with appropriate support.

Queue Controllers will be appointed at voting centres and will have primary responsibility for queue management. Additional staff (Voting Centre Liaison Officers) may provide assistance to Queue Controllers in managing longer queues and attending to voter queries as time allows. These staff provide points of contact for questions and assistance for voters.

If a disturbance occurs either within the voting centre or outside the premises staff are trained in the steps to be taken to diffuse and resolve the situation as required.

ADDITIONAL VOTING CENTRE SERVICES

MULTI-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTIONS

Voting instructions in a minimum of 19 languages plus English will be pre-printed in voting compartments at voting centres. A list of the languages included appears in Appendix 6.

GROUP VOTING TICKETS

Large posters will be provided for each voting centre alerting and directing electors to the VCM, who will have group voting tickets booklets for each region on display and available for inspection.

VOTING CENTRE MAPS

Hardcopy district maps showing voting centres within and on the fringe of the district will be prepared for use in election offices and voting centres. These maps will be used to assist in directing electors to a voting centre within the district in which they live or alternatively to a voting centre outside their district.

ACCESSIBILITY AIDS AND TOOLS

A number of tools and aids are provided to assist electors to vote. These include:

- large magnifying sheets at each voting centre
- maxi pencils to allow certain electors to more easily grip the pencil e.g. arthritis
- assisted hearing devices at early voting centres
- wheelchair or desktop voting compartments
- Voters Voice app
- translated voting instructions in voting compartments

It is the VEC's intent to provide an accessible experience for all electors to enable them to cast their vote.

COUNTING INFORMATION

Below is an overview of the counting processes for the 2018 State election. The appendices to this document include the district and region count schedules. Count schedules have also been included in candidate handbooks

COUNTING METHODS

Different counting methods apply for districts and regions.

These include:

1. Preferential counts – for districts. All preferential counts will be conducted manually.
2. Proportional representation (PR) counts – for regions. PR counts will be conducted by computer.

VOTE COUNTING

Progressive results information will be provided as it becomes available and will include:

1. for district counts: first preference results, two-candidate-preferred (2CP) results, recheck results, preference distribution results (if required), two-party-preferred (2PP) results (if required), and the names of elected members and
2. for region counts: first preference results, recheck results, distribution results, and the names of elected members.

Results will also be aggregated to show State-wide trends for the lower and upper houses.

ELECTION NIGHT TRIAL

An election night trial will be conducted on the evening of Wednesday 21 November 2018. The media will be invited to participate to test

data feeds in readiness for election night. All EMs will enter test data into the VEC's election management system to ensure communication and technology requirements are in place for the transmission of results to the media and the VEC's website. Test data will be entered against the actual candidates for the 2018 State election. All test data will be deleted from the database and website at the completion of the trial.

ELECTION DAY

EARLY EXTRACTION AND SORT

Legislation allows for the early extraction and sort of postal and early votes on election day. This activity must take place within a restricted area with tight controls in place. Restricted areas will be established at each election office, standalone early voting centre (that is not an election day voting centre) and the centralised postal vote count centre. Scrutineers and staff will not be able to take recording devices into the restricted area. Check in facilities will be made available at these venues. Further information will be provided at briefing sessions with staff and candidates prior to the commencement of the extraction and sorting activities.

The extraction and sort of postal votes for the 88 districts will commence at the centralised postal vote count centre from 8.00 am on election day.

The extraction and sort of early votes will commence from 4.00 pm election night in each election office early voting centre and most stand-alone early voting centres with a priority given to own district early votes.

COUNTING

After the close of voting at 6.00 pm, ordinary votes issued in election day voting centres will be counted in voting centres.

Three counts will be conducted in strict order, as follows:

1. First preference count – district
2. Two-candidate-preferred count – district
3. First preference count – region

After the counting of first preference votes for the district, a two-candidate-preferred (2CP) count will be conducted, with preferences distributed to the two candidates considered 'most likely' to be in the lead after the distribution of preferences. The purpose of the two-candidate-preferred count is to provide an early indication of the result of the election, and to provide detailed information for political parties and analysts. The final voting centre count to be conducted on election night will be the first preference count for the region. Voting centre staff will record first preference votes for the region by group (above-the-line and below-the-line) or by ungrouped candidate (below-the-line only).

Counting of postal votes received up to the close of voting on Friday 23 November will commence at 6.00 pm on election night in the centralised postal vote count centre (first preference and 2CP), with counting continuing until the last day for admission of postal votes to the count (Friday 30 November 2018). First preference counting of region postal votes will take place on Sunday 25 and Monday 26 November and will also continue until Friday 30 November.

Counting of early votes (first preference and 2CP), cast within the district will commence at 6.00 pm on election night. First preference counting for the home electorate region early votes will commence on Monday 26 November.

Early votes taken for other districts will be included in the declaration exchange that will take place on the Monday and Tuesday following election day, with the counting of these votes commencing from Wednesday 28 November.

Absent votes taken for other districts in voting centres on election day will also be included in the declaration exchange. First preference and

2CP counts for absent votes will commence from Wednesday 28 November.

PROVISIONAL VOTE CHECKING

Checking of the enrolment entitlement for voters completing an 'Application for Enrolment/Provisional Vote' will take place at the VEC during the week after election day. Enrolment entitlement must be checked before any of these votes can be admitted to the count.

Front covers from provisional votes taken in voting centres on election day and at early voting centres prior to election day that require checking will be sent to the VEC HO via the declaration exchange on Monday 26 November. Provisional vote envelopes will be delivered to relevant districts with the declaration exchange.

Provisional votes for close elections will be priority checked.

A thorough check of enrolment entitlement will be conducted for each provisional vote. This will include a search of the enrolment register to check that the elector had not previously been removed from the register of electors on the grounds that they were no longer eligible. A check will also be made to determine if citizenship or British subject status has previously been confirmed for the voter, and that the address for which enrolment is claimed is a valid address for enrolment purposes.

As a result of these checks, a decision will be made to either admit the vote to the count or not. The enrolment register will also be updated from the provisional votes where required.

COUNTING AFTER ELECTION DAY – DISTRICT RECHECKS AND PREFERENCE DISTRIBUTIONS, AND REGION RECHECKS

All district primary counts will be rechecked in election offices after election day, or in the centralised postal vote count centre. Data entry of ballot paper preference data will be used in one district as a pilot to replace the manual

recheck process. This will allow a computerised preference distribution to take place once all ballot papers have been data entered.

Preference distributions to determine the result of an election will be required in districts where no candidate obtains an absolute majority (more than 50 per cent) of the first preference votes. Preference distributions will take place after all rechecking has been completed and the last date for admission of postal votes to the count has passed (amalgamation activities will commence on Monday 3 December).

All region primary counts will be rechecked either in election offices (country regions) or a centralised region recheck centre (metro regions). During the recheck only above-the-line and informal ballot papers will be rechecked as below-the-line ballot papers will be double keyed at the computerised counting centre. Any below-the-line ballot papers identified during the recheck will be added to the primary counted below-the-line ballot papers.

COUNTING AFTER ELECTION DAY – REGION PREFERENCE DISTRIBUTIONS

A centralised counting centre will be established for the conduct of the computerised counts for the five metropolitan regions. The VEC has secured an area at the Melbourne Showgrounds as the count venue for the metropolitan region counts. Additional count centres have been secured and will be established for the three country regions in Ballarat, Shepparton and Warragul. Candidates and parties will be advised of the address and access arrangements to the count venues closer to the commencement of the computerised counts.

Only below-the-line ballot papers will be transported to the count centres for data entry. The above-the-line and informal ballot papers will remain at the respective recheck venue. A full reconciliation of ballot papers will be conducted prior to shipping any ballot papers to the count centre.

Below-the-line ballot papers will be double keyed before the entry of above-the-line and informal vote totals.

Should a region recount be required, above-the-line and informal ballot papers will be transported to the relevant counting centre where a recount will take place.

It is intended that the data entry of below-the-line ballot papers for the upper house will commence no later than Monday 3 December at the metro counting centre. This is to allow time for all region ballot papers to be carefully rechecked and reconciled prior to the dispatch of ballot papers to the count centre. Data entry in country regions will commence from Thursday 6 December.

It is estimated that all counts will be completed no later than Tuesday 11 December 2018. The proposed region count timetable is included in Appendix 5.

COUNTING AFTER ELECTION DAY – DISTRICT RECOUNT

A full recount of votes can take place before a candidate is declared elected. Recounts may be conducted at the:

- EM's discretion or
- request of a candidate, specifying reasons.

Alternatively, a recount MUST be conducted if directed by the Commission.

The VEC head office will observe the outcome of each election and work with the EM to determine if a recount should take place. If so, advice will be provided to candidates and parties.

COUNTING AFTER ELECTION DAY – CORRECTED TWO-CANDIDATE-PREFERRED COUNTS

The VEC will monitor the results of the two-candidate-preferred counts on election night. Where the candidate selection for any district is incorrect, the VEC will not adjust the two-candidate-preferred count on election night. A corrected two-candidate-preferred count will

take place during the week following election day.

COUNTING AFTER ELECTION DAY – DISTRICT TWO-PARTY-PREFERRED COUNTS

The VEC intends to continue the practice of preparing two-party-preferred statistics for the 2018 State election. The purpose of the two-party-preferred vote is to show, for each district and for the State as a whole, how the vote was divided between the ALP and the Liberal and National parties, taking into account the preferences of people who vote for minor parties and independents.

The VEC will use 2CP or preference distribution results for many districts, but will conduct special two-party-preferred counts where 2CP or preference distribution results do not show how the vote is divided between the ALP and the Liberal and National parties.

The VEC intends to conduct two-party-preferred counts—where required—once all counting in each district has been completed.

The proposed timeline for the conduct of counts for districts is included in Appendix 4.

AVAILABILITY OF ELECTION RESULTS

The VEC will provide downloadable data files for the 2018 State election on its website in a form that can be readily used by TV and print media.

Results data files will also be published at regular intervals on the VEC website that can be easily downloaded by any interested parties. The data files will include information on candidates, party affiliation (where applicable) and voting location. Each result set will be in ballot paper position order and will contain the total number of votes received by each candidate for district counts, and for groups ATL and BTL, and ungrouped candidates for region counts.

DECLARATION OF THE RESULT

EMs are required to publicly declare the election and to announce the name/s of the candidate/s elected.

Prior to declaring an election, the EM will ensure that the number of outstanding ballot papers could not possibly affect the result of the election. Candidates will be advised of the date and time of the declaration.

Region results will be declared in each region by a nominated district EM.

All elections must be declared before the return of the writ. The latest possible date for a declaration to take place is Friday 14 December 2018.

RETURN OF THE WRITS

The writs for the 2018 State election must be returned to the Governor of Victoria on or before Saturday 15 December 2018.

COMPLAINTS AND ENFORCEMENT

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

The VEC will only accept and act on complaints made in writing—these may be in letter, fax or email form. In most cases, complainants are alleging that there has been a breach of the law and, as such, there must be an evidentiary trail. Any complaints lodged with EMs will be forwarded to the VEC head office for consideration and response.

The VEC will not discuss individual complaints with members of the media under any circumstances, not even to confirm or deny that a complaint has been received.

COURT OF DISPUTED RETURNS

The validity of an election can only be disputed by means of a petition to the Court of Disputed Returns.

A petition to the Court of Disputed Returns must be filed with the Prothonotary of the Supreme Court within 40 days after the return of the writ. The latest date for lodgement with the Supreme Court for the 2018 State election is Thursday 24 January 2019.

COMPULSORY VOTING ENFORCEMENT

Section 163 of the *Electoral Act 2002* determines that the VEC must, within six months of election day, send by post to each elector who appears not to have voted a notice asking why they did not vote.

In January 2019 the VEC will commence non-voter follow up of persons who were required to vote at the State election but who appear not to have voted. Non-voter follow up will take place in four stages. The first three stages will be conducted by the VEC with the final stage being managed by Fines Victoria.

The non-voter process will be 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.

INFRINGEMENT NOTICE

The VEC will prepare and send an infringement notice to any apparent non-voter whose excuse is not considered valid and sufficient, and those who failed to respond to the apparent failure-to-vote notice. A penalty applies to this notice. Additionally, non-voters may opt to have their matter heard directly in the Magistrates' Court. The VEC will action any such requests at the completion of the infringement notice stage. It is a requirement of legislation that non-voters who provide a valid response for not voting may have the infringement against them withdrawn. A 'Withdrawal of Infringement' notice will be mailed to each non-voter in this category.

PENALTY REMINDER NOTICE

The VEC will prepare and send a penalty reminder notice to those apparent non-voters who have not paid the penalty for failing to vote. The penalty and prescribed costs apply to this notice. Non-voters may also opt to have their matter heard directly in the Magistrates' Court during the penalty reminder stage. The VEC will action any such requests at the completion of this stage.

INFRINGEMENT FINES FILE

An infringement fines file will be prepared and lodged with Fines Victoria within the prescribed timeframe.

RECEIPT OF PENALTIES

The VEC will receive and record all payments made in relation to compulsory voting. At the completion of the process, all penalty payments collected for the 2018 State election will be transferred to consolidated revenue at a time to be determined by the VEC's finance branch.

EVALUATION AND REPORTING

EVALUATION

The VEC will engage an independent research company to evaluate the delivery of the 2018 State election services.

The evaluation will take into account awareness of the election and election services and satisfaction with those services, primarily amongst early voters, election day voters, CALD voters and postal voters.

A selection of RPPs and candidates will also be surveyed on their satisfaction of the services provided at the election.

INFORMAL BALLOT PAPER ANALYSIS

The VEC will conduct a survey of informal district ballot papers as part of the rechecking process for the State election. The aim of the survey is to measure the incidence of various types of informal voting, and to contribute to Australia-wide literature on this subject. The VEC will survey all districts.

REPORT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE CONDUCT OF THE 2018 STATE ELECTION

Under section 8 (2)(b) of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC must report to each house of Parliament within 12 months of the conduct of each election on the administration of that election. For the 2018 State election, the VEC aims to present its report mid-2019. The report will provide information on the conduct of the State election including:

- analysis and summary of results
- selected detailed statistics

- planning overview
- details of the election budget
- election administration, staffing and infrastructure
- election services to voters, political parties and candidates and the media
- communication services
- innovations and special projects
- process summary and transparency.

The report will also provide details of any recommendations for legislative consideration and research that are identified as a result of the review of all aspects of the election.

DISPOSAL OF ELECTION MATERIAL

The VEC manages the security, storage and disposal of election material in accordance with standards and disposal authorities issued by the Public Records Office Victoria, standards issued by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, section 122 of the *Electoral Act 2002* and Regulation 45 of the *Electoral Regulations 2012*. All parcels are to be kept safely until the completion of any proceedings in the Court of Disputed Returns.

All election material will be disposed of or transferred as detailed in legislation. A certified copy of the electoral roll as at the close of roll/entitlement date will be retained permanently, initially by the VEC until transferred to the PROV as a State Archive. Where no petition is filed with the Supreme Court, all ballot material will be disposed of as soon as practicable after 24 January 2019.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: 2018 VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION TIMELINE

COUNTDOWN			
Information session (Independent candidates) at VEC 2.00 pm	27	OCT 28	SUN
	26	OCT 29	MON
Election offices open to public ISSUE OF WRIT 6.00 pm	25	OCT 30	TUE
Nominations open First day for submission of postal vote applications	24	OCT 31	WED
	23	NOV 1	THU
	22	NOV 2	FRI
	21	NOV 3	SAT
	20	NOV 4	SUN
	19	NOV 5	MON
Election offices open until 8.00 pm Close of rolls at 8.00 pm	18	NOV 6	TUE CUP DAY
	17	NOV 7	WED
RPPs Close of nominations at 12 noon Close of group registration 12 noon	16	NOV 8	THU
Close of independent nominations with EM at 12 noon Ballot draw commences at 1.00 pm	15	NOV 9	FRI
	14	NOV 10	SAT
Final day for lodgement of group voting tickets (12 noon)	13	NOV 11	SUN
First day for submission of HTVCs to Commission for registration Early voting commences at 9.00 am	12	NOV 12	MON
	11	NOV 13	TUE
Mobile voting commences	10	NOV 14	WED
	9	NOV 15	THU
Close of submission of HTVCs to Commission for registration at 12 noon	8	NOV 16	FRI
Early voting open 9.00 am – 5.00 pm	7	NOV 17	SAT
	6	NOV 18	SUN
Close of HTVC correction period at 12 noon	5	NOV 19	MON
	4	NOV 20	TUE
Close of submission of postal vote applications at 6.00 pm	3	NOV 21	WED
Early voting centres open until 8.00 pm	2	NOV 22	THU
Close of early voting 6.00 pm	1	NOV 23	FRI
ELECTION DAY	0	NOV 24	SAT
Last day that votes can be admitted to count 6.00 pm	6	NOV 30	FRI
RETURN OF WRITS (on or before this day)	21	DEC 15	SAT

RPPs = Registered Political Parties; EM = Election Manager; HTVCs = How-to-vote Cards

APPENDIX 2: DISTRICT AND REGION LIST

 Indicates district responsible for the region draw and declaration of results.

Region	District
Eastern Metropolitan	Bayswater
	Box Hill
	Bulleen
	Croydon
	Eltham
	Ferntree Gully
	Forest Hill
	Ivanhoe
	Mount Waverley
	Ringwood
	Warrandyte
Eastern Victoria	Bass
	Evelyn
	Gembrook
	Gippsland East
	Gippsland South
	Hastings
	Monbulk
	Mornington
	Morwell
	Narracan
	Nepean
Northern Metropolitan	Broadmeadows
	Brunswick
	Bundoora
	Melbourne
	Mill Park
	Northcote
	Pascoe Vale
	Preston
	Richmond
	Thomastown
	Yuroke
Northern Victoria	Benambra
	Bendigo East
	Bendigo West
	Eildon
	Euroa
	Macedon
	Mildura
	Murray Plains
	Ovens Valley
	Shepparton
	Yan Yean

Region	District
South-Eastern Metropolitan	Carrum
	Clarinda
	Cranbourne
	Dandenong
	Frankston
	Keysborough
	Mordialloc
	Mulgrave
	Narre Warren North
	Narre Warren South
	Rowville
Southern Metropolitan	Albert Park
	Bentleigh
	Brighton
	Burwood
	Caulfield
	Hawthorn
	Kew
	Malvern
	Oakleigh
	Prahran
	Sandringham
Western Metropolitan	Altona
	Essendon
	Footscray
	Kororoit
	Niddrie
	St Albans
	Sunbury
	Sydenham
	Tarneit
	Werribee
	Williamstown
Western Victoria	Bellarine
	Buninyong
	Geelong
	Lara
	Lowan
	Melton
	Polwarth
	Ripon
	South Barwon
	South-West Coast
	Wendouree

APPENDIX 3: ELECTION PREPARATION KEY MILESTONES

	Start date	End date
Senior Election Officials orientation training	2 October 2017	30 November 2017
Election Managers/Assistant Election Managers Appointed	1 January 2018	26 January 2018
RPP briefings	19 February 2018	14 September 2018
Office lease period (6 months)	1 August 2018	31 January 2019
Resource delivery and election office set-up	20 August 2018	10 September 2018
Election Managers/Assistant Election Managers training	6 August 2018	31 August 2018
Public Enquiry Service operational	24 September 2018	27 November 2018
Email to Election Officials	26 September 2018	28 September 2018
Election Managers/Assistant Election Managers in office systems training	9 October 2018	11 October 2018
Election Managers in offices	22 October 2018	10 December 2018
Early Voting Centre leasing period	8 October 2018	7 December 2018
Enrolment advertising	15 October 2018	6 November 2018
Final 1 day briefing of Election Managers	24 October 2018	24 October 2018
Election Guide mail out	31 October 2018	5 November 2018

Central Processing Centre operational	31 October 2018	30 November 2018
Postal Vote Count Centre	24 November 2018	30 November 2018
Centralised recheck and computerised count centre (metro regions)	26 November 2018	12 December 2018
Computerised count centres (country regions)	5 December 2018	10 December 2018

APPENDIX 4: PROPOSED DISTRICT COUNT TIMELINE

Date	Notes	Early Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Ordinary Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Absent Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Postal Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Marked as Voted (MAV) and Provisional Votes Primary, 2CP and Recheck	Preference Distributions and Recounts	2PP where required
Saturday 24 November	Election Day	4.00 – 6.00 pm: Sort own District votes. 6.00 pm: Primary and 2CP count of own District votes. Sort other Districts.	Primary and 2CP count in voting centres	Commence sort/package of Absent votes for inclusion in dec exchange	8.00 am: Extract and sort all admitted votes at Postal Vote Count Centre (PVCC). 6.00 pm: Primary and 2CP count.	Commence sort/package of MAV and Provisional votes for inclusion in dec exchange		
Sunday 25 November	Preparation for dec exchange	Package for dec exchange		Complete sort/package for dec exchange	Election offices package postal votes for dispatch to PVCC	Complete sort/package for dec exchange		
Monday 26 November	Dec exchange collected	Correct any incorrect 2CPs. Commence rechecks.	Correct any incorrect 2CPs. Commence rechecks.		Correct any incorrect 2CPs. Extraction and primary, 2CP and recheck counts for close seats only (at PVCC).	Provisional vote checking commences at VEC (close seats prioritised)		
Tuesday 27 November	Dec exchange received	Complete 2CP corrections. Continue Primary, 2CP and recheck counts.	Complete 2CP corrections. Continue rechecks.	Commence marking absent votes off election roll	Complete 2CP corrections. Commence rechecks. Continue counts for close seats only.	Commence primary, 2CP and recheck counts of admitted provisional votes		
Wednesday 28 November		Continue Primary, 2CP and recheck counts	Complete rechecks	Commence primary, 2CP and recheck counts.	Continue rechecks. Continue counts for close seats.			
Thursday 29 November		Complete Primary, 2CP and recheck counts.		Complete primary, 2CP and recheck counts	Continue rechecks. Continue counts for close seats.	Primary, 2CP and recheck all MAV votes.		
Friday 30 November	Last day to accept postal votes into count (6.00 pm)				Complete rechecks. Continue counts for close seats.	Complete checking at VEC. Complete primary, 2CP and recheck counts of admitted provisional votes.		
Saturday 1 December		Complete primary, 2CP and recheck counts of votes returned from interstate/ overseas (at PVCC)			Conduct primary, 2CP and recheck counts of remaining postal votes			
Sunday 2 December								
Monday 3 December		PVCC dispatches early votes to Districts requiring preference distributions			PVCC dispatches postal votes to Districts requiring preference distributions		Commence amalgamation (where preference distribution is required)	
Tuesday 4 December							Commence preference distributions. Commence recounts (where required)	
Wednesday 5 December							Complete preference distributions. Continue recounts (where required).	Commence 2PP counts
Thursday 6 December							Continue recounts (where required)	
Friday 7 December							Complete any recounts	
Saturday 8 December								
Sunday 9 December								
Monday 10 December								All 2PP counts completed
Tuesday 11 December								
Wednesday 12 December								
Thursday 13 December								
Friday 14 December								
Saturday 15 December	Last Day for Return of Writs							

Notes:

This is a proposed timeline only. Timings are subject to change and close seats will have their timelines expedited where possible
Activities will occur at the election office unless stated otherwise
All primary counts will be followed by a 2CP distribution, and then a recheck of all ballot papers
2CP results will not be adjusted after rechecks are conducted. Therefore, there may be some minor variations between 2CP and recheck totals
District declarations will commence from Friday 30 November 2018

APPENDIX 5: PROPOSED REGION COUNT TIMELINE

Date / Venue	Notes	Early Voting Centres, Voting Centres and Election Offices			Postal Vote Count Centre (PVCC)	Metro Region Recheck Centre (MRRC)	Country Region Election Offices	Metro Region Computer Count Centre (MCCC)	Country Region Computer Count Centres (RCCC)
		Early Votes Primary	Ordinary Votes Primary	Absent, Marked as Voted (MAV) and Provisional Votes Primary	Postal Votes Primary and Recheck	Rechecks – all vote types (ex. Postal)	Rechecks – all vote types (ex. Postal)	BTL Data Entry and loading of ATL votes – 5 Metro Regions	BTL Data Entry and loading of ATL votes – 1 Region each
Saturday 24 November	Election Day	Sort own and other Region papers	Primary count in Voting Centres	Commence sort/package for dec exchange	8.00 am: Extract and sort admitted votes				
Sunday 25 November	Preparation for dec exchange	Package for dec exchange		Complete sort/ package for exchange	Primary count all extracted papers				
Monday 26 November	Dec exchange collected	Commence Primary count	Metro offices dispatch to MRRC			Receive Ordinary Votes. Start rechecks			
Tuesday 27 November	Dec exchange received	Commence further Primary counts			Commence rechecks (all Regions)	Ordinary Vote rechecks continue	Commence Ordinary Vote rechecks		
Wednesday 28 November		Complete further Primary counts		Commence Primary counts of Absent votes	Continue rechecks (all Regions)	Ordinary Vote rechecks continue	Ordinary Vote rechecks continue		
Thursday 29 November				Commence Primary count of Prov and MAV votes, and complete Absent count	Complete rechecks (all Regions) of all papers counted on Sunday	Ordinary Vote rechecks continue	Complete Ordinary Vote rechecks		
Friday 30 November	Last day to accept postal votes into count (6.00 pm)	Metro election offices dispatch votes to MRRC		Complete Primary count of Provisional votes. Metro election offices dispatch votes to MRRC		Ordinary Vote rechecks continue. Receive other vote types.	Commence rechecks of all other vote types	Commence first round of BTL data entry	
Saturday 1 December					Extract and sort all other postal votes (plus any early votes from interstate / overseas)	Complete Ordinary vote rechecks. Commence rechecks of all other vote types			
Sunday 2 December					Primary count and recheck	Rechecks of all other vote types continue			
Monday 3 December					Transfer BTL votes for 5 Metro regions to MCCC	Rechecks of all other vote types continue	Rechecks of all other vote types continue	Continue first round of BTL data entry.	
Tuesday 4 December						Rechecks of all other vote types continue	Rechecks of all other vote types continue	Continue first round of BTL data entry	
Wednesday 5 December					Dispatch all BTL votes to RCCC	Rechecks of all other vote types continue	Complete rechecks and dispatch BTLs to RCCC	Continue first round of BTL data entry	Receive BTL votes from country offices
Thursday 6 December						Complete rechecks of all other vote types		Complete first round of BTL data entry	Commence first round BTL data entry
Friday 7 December								Commence second round of BTL data entry	Complete first round of BTL data entry
Saturday 8 December								Continue second round of BTL data entry	Commence second round BTL data entry
Sunday 9 December								Complete second round of BTL data entry	Complete second round BTL data entry
Monday 10 December								Entry of ATL votes	Entry of ATL votes
Tuesday 11 December								Calculate results (all Regions)	
Wednesday 12 December								Commence declarations	
Thursday 13 December								Any recounts commence	
Friday 14 December								Any recounts are completed	
Saturday 15 December	Last Day for Return of Writs								

Notes:

This is a proposed timeline only. Timings are subject to change

BTL = below-the-line / ATL = above-the-line

Metro Regions Recheck Centre is in the same building as the Metro Regions Computer Count Centre (so papers are not dispatched from one to other)

APPENDIX 6: COMMUNITY LANGUAGES

The VEC currently provides translated information and operates interpreter telephone lines in the community languages listed below (plus one for “all other languages”).

Language	Telephone	Language description
Amharic	9209 0190	African language
Arabic	9209 0100	
Bosnian	9209 0191	
Chinese	9209 0101	Cantonese
Chinese	9209 0106	Mandarin
Croatian	9209 0102	
Dari	9209 0193	
Greek	9209 0103	
Italian	9209 0104	
Khmer	9209 0112	
Korean	9209 0194	
Macedonian	9209 0105	
Persian	9209 0195	
Russian	9209 0196	
Serbian	9209 0107	
Somali	9209 0108	African language
Spanish	9209 0109	
Turkish	9209 0110	
Vietnamese	9209 0111	
All other non-English languages	9209 0112	



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