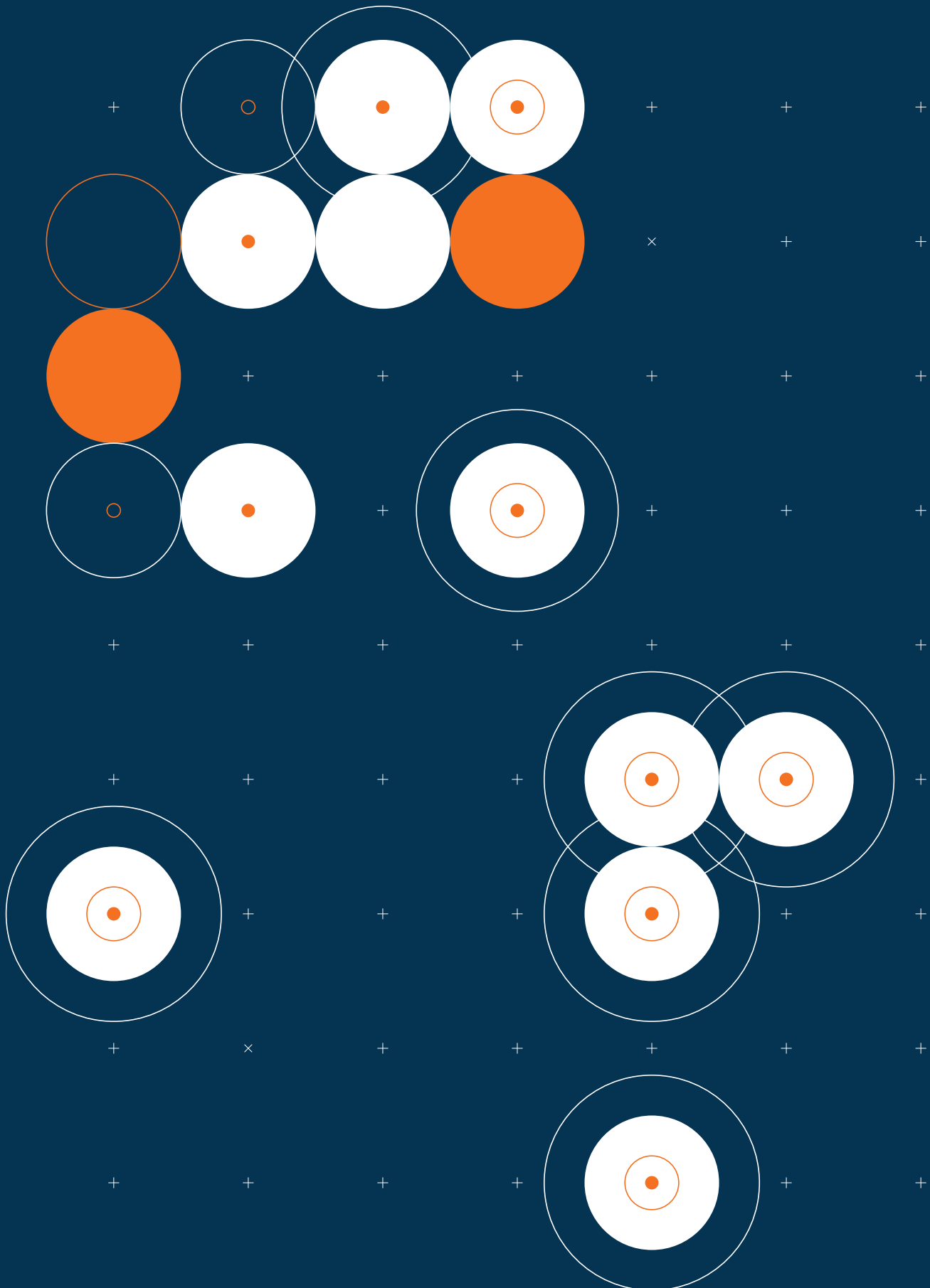


Service plan

2024 Local Government elections

June 2024



Front cover: Graphic representation of the key dates identified in the 2024 local government elections timeline. The proposed timeline dates have been imposed as outlines. A secondary colour, red, signifies the overlapping and standalone 2024 Melbourne City Council elections dates.



© State of Victoria

(Victorian Electoral Commission)
June 2024

This work, Service plan 2024 Local Government elections, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>]. You are free to share this work under that licence, on the condition that you do not change any content and you credit the State of Victoria (Victorian Electoral Commission) as author and comply with the other licence terms. The licence does not apply to any branding, including Government logos.



Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
T 131 832
info@vec.vic.gov.au
vec.vic.gov.au

Service plan

2024 Local Government elections

Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

Note

This election service plan is also available on our website at vec.vic.gov.au in PDF format.

Foreword

This service plan is the foundation for our conduct of the 2024 local government elections in Victoria. It outlines our work at each stage of the election timeline and sets targets to assess the success of the program following its completion.

On Tuesday 30 April 2024, the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Bill 2024 was introduced to Parliament. Among other changes, the Bill proposes changes to the close of roll for local council elections and enables other timeline changes to be made through regulations. These are critical changes to address the risk of potential election failures and resolve stressors on the timeline led by the increased scale and complexity of local government elections. Such failures would cause delay to restoring local council representation after an election and would cause councils to incur substantial additional costs.

At the time of finalising this service plan, the Bill is before Parliament. For this reason, this service plan refers to the currently legislated timeline and highlights changes that would be made to this timeline if the Bill becomes law and the planned changes to regulations follow. To assist local councils to prepare for the elections, we are currently stepping up our engagement efforts. These efforts specifically include providing advice on the impact of changes to the timeline.

In addition, we will continue to work on addressing election cost pressures on local councils, including through the centralisation of receiving and responding to public enquiries, the issue of replacement ballot papers and the deployment of measures to ensure electoral integrity.

I look forward to working alongside the local government sector as we deliver successful local government elections in 2024 and beyond.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sven Bluemmel'.

Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner

History of the plan

This document has been prepared in consultation with Victoria's local government sector. The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) released the draft election service plan in October 2023 and presented the plan at a series of consultation sessions held across the state during October 2023.

We appreciate the council officers who made themselves available to attend the sessions and contribute to planning for the 2024 local government elections.

For further information on our local government program and planning for the 2024 local government elections, contact:

Local government program manager
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins St
Melbourne VIC 3000

Email: LGProgram2024@vec.vic.gov.au

Contents

Background and purpose	7	Digital services.....	19
Introduction	7	Advertising	20
Guiding principles.....	7	Media.....	21
Legal framework	7	Education and inclusion services	21
Privacy.....	8	Election office management.....	22
Occupational Health & Safety	8	Election offices and venues.....	22
Statement of intent	8	Recruitment of senior election officials	22
Strategic initiatives.....	8	Support for election managers	23
Electoral Integrity	10	Candidates	24
Complaints management	10	Candidate information session.....	24
Disputing election results.....	10	Draw for position on ballot paper	24
Storage and disposal of ballot paper	10	Candidate statements and photographs.....	25
System security	10	Candidate enquiries and support	25
Reporting on the conduct of the 2024 local government elections	11	Refund of nomination fees.....	25
Electoral structure and ward boundary reviews.....	11	Ballot material	26
Election timeline	12	Postal ballot pack contents	26
Election service agreement and management	13	Ballot pack preparation and distribution	26
Cost management.....	13	Uncontested leaflets.....	27
External service providers	13	Ballot material security.....	27
Arrangements with other agencies	14	Voting	28
Evaluation and reporting.....	14	Postal voting.....	28
Resource management and sustainability	14	Replacement votes	28
Measuring performance	15	Voting at the election office	28
Enrolment and close of rolls.....	17	Counting the votes	29
Overview	17	Counting methods.....	29
Roll production stages.....	17	Preparing for the count	29
Provision of election roll products	18	Unenrolled vote checking	29
Communication and engagement.....	19	Counting activities.....	29
Information services.....	19	Declaration of the result.....	31

Compulsory voting enforcement.....	32	Appendix 11: Education and inclusion services.....	50
Stage 1 – Apparent failure to vote notice	32	Appendix 12: Community languages	51
Stage 2 – Infringement notice	32	Appendix 13: List of data categories reported for 2024 local government elections	52
Stage 3 – Penalty reminder notice	32		
Stage 4 – Lodgement with Magistrates’ Court and Fines Victoria.....	32		
Receipt of penalties	33		
Melbourne City Council elections.....	34		
Background and purpose	34		
Election timeline	34		
Voters’ roll.....	34		
Communication and engagement	34		
Election office management.....	34		
Candidates	34		
Ballot material	36		
Counting the votes.....	37		
Appendices.....	38		
Appendix 1: 2024 local government elections timeline... 38			
Appendix 2: 2024 Melbourne City Council Leadership Team election timeline	39		
Appendix 3: 2024 Melbourne City Council Election of Councillors timeline	40		
Appendix 4: Amendments to the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020	41		
Appendix 5: Councils and VEC – key interactions timeline	42		
Appendix 6: Diagram – ‘Who can vote in the 2024 local government elections?’	44		
Appendix 7: Diagram – ‘2024 Melbourne City Council elections – enrolment and entitlement information’.....	45		
Appendix 8: Councils requiring an electoral structure or ward boundary review.....	46		
Appendix 9: Election preparation key milestones.....	48		
Appendix 10: VEC recommendations from the 2020 report to Parliament.....	49		

Background and purpose

Introduction

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has a long history of working in partnership with the local government sector. This long-standing commitment to deliver high quality election services is reflected in the considerable planning, and extensive preparation and co-ordination undertaken for each election cycle.

We strive to deliver a great voter experience. This service plan (the plan) is a keystone document, informing all stakeholders of the planning and preparation for the 2024 local government elections to achieve that aim.

The plan provides all election participants with advice on how the 2024 local government elections will be delivered.

This also extends to the many employees, appointees, contractors, and service providers we rely on. Their understanding of the election and their place and importance in the event is critical to a successful outcome and a high quality of service for voters.

Guiding principles

The 2024 local government elections will be conducted on established and accepted principles.

Service excellence

We will:

- > aim to deliver fair and equitable elections through high quality, value for money electoral products and services
- > perform all tasks in accordance with electoral law and approach all participants in the process fairly
- > work to provide voters with convenient, quality services through which they are able to exercise their democratic rights.

To effectively meet our legislative obligations, we must respond to the changing electoral environment and align our approach with the expectations of voters, councils, and other stakeholders.

Local focus for election services

The Electoral Commissioner appoints an Election Manager for each local council election. Victorian law provides the Election Manager full responsibility for the conduct of each election.

Accordingly, the management of candidates, in person enquiries from the public, and vote counting will take place within each local council area wherever possible.

Costs to be kept to a minimum

The plan aims to provide quality election services while keeping costs to a minimum for councils. The local government elections will meet all statutory requirements and prioritise customer service and accuracy of the information we provide. Each aspect of the 2024 local government elections will be analysed in detail and transparently shared in relation to costs and benefits.

Legal framework

Victoria has 79 local councils. At the time of printing, 78 will have elections this year, as Moira Shire Council was dismissed and administrators were appointed until 2028. Victorian local government elections will be held on Saturday 26 October 2024.

The VEC is responsible for the conduct of all Victorian local government elections, by-elections, and countbacks. Local government elections are governed primarily by the following legislative instruments.

- > *Electoral Act 2002*: establishes the VEC as an independent statutory authority and sets out its functions and powers.
- > *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act): provides for the holding of elections and their timeframe and voting method, voters' roll entitlements, candidacy, electoral offences and disputing the validity of an election. It includes how councils are constituted and the electoral structural review process set to be completed in June 2024.
- > *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020* (the Regulations): prescribes the conduct of local government elections, mandatory training for candidates and the enforcement of compulsory voting.
- > *City of Melbourne Act 2001* (the CoM Act) and *City of Melbourne (Electoral) Regulations 2022* (the CoM Regulations): sets out the process for the election of councillors, lord mayor and deputy lord mayor to the Melbourne City Council and voters' roll entitlements.
- > *Infringements Act 2006* and *Fines Reform Act 2014*: provide for the stages of compulsory voting enforcement.
- > *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Bill 2024*: introduced to Parliament on Tuesday 30 April 2024, the Bill proposes changes to the close of roll for local council elections and enables other timeline changes to be made through regulations. At the time of finalising this service plan, the Bill is before Parliament. For this reason, the plan refers to the currently legislated timeline while also highlighting the changes that would be made to this timeline if the Bill becomes law and the planned changes to regulations follow.

All procedures and processes we implement during local government elections are prescribed or informed by these instruments.

The Minister for Local Government has determined that the voting system to be used for elections under the Act is postal voting.

Privacy

We are bound by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, as well as other laws, that impose obligations on the handling of personal and health information. Our privacy policy provides guidance to VEC staff on the management of personal information and supports our need to collect information and the right of the individual to privacy. All privacy enquiries and concerns should be directed to our privacy officer by email at privacy@vec.vic.gov.au. For more information on how we manage privacy, visit vec.vic.gov.au/privacy.

Occupational Health & Safety

Pursuant to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic), we have a duty to protect the health and safety of electoral participants while attending a VEC site and its surrounds.

We must so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, and ensure business activities conducted on our premises do not put the health and safety of electoral participants at risk. As a result, certain sites and their surrounds where we establish election offices and/or count venues may have physical controls deployed in addition to the normal operational measures provided under the Act.

Any site operating with additional controls will clearly communicate these to both employees and the public upon entry.

Statement of intent

Victorians who are eligible to vote will do so at an election that is:

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

This intent is aligned with our vision and purpose: 'All Victorians actively participating in their democracy'. This single intent is the premise for all election plans and projects. It assists decision-making, actions and the priorities associated with the allocation of resources.

To meet this intent, the following major operational objectives were identified:

- > complete all election preparation projects by 30 June 2024
- > ensure that as many eligible Victorians as possible are correctly enrolled by the close of the roll
- > support the sector transitioning to ratepayer enrolment by application
- > increase public awareness and knowledge of the election process and ensure the various participation methods are:
 - safe, convenient, and easy to access
 - timely to their requirements
 - easy to understand
 - respectful and courteous
 - confidential
- > assist candidates to meet nomination requirements and participate compliantly and effectively in the election
- > provide electoral information to all stakeholders in a format that is easy to find, use, and understand, and is deliverable through a variety of media in a timely manner
- > ensure all votes cast are reconciled, 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 election results.

Strategic initiatives

We adopt a process of continuous improvement to refine our operational model and supporting frameworks, to ensure operational needs are legislatively compliant and align with our strategic outcomes.

Also taken into account is feedback from councils, voters and our advisory groups relating to the 2020 local government elections. This work includes consideration of the recommendations we made in the 2020 local government elections report to parliament.

An update on the progress made in relation to the recommendations can be found in **Appendix 10**.

Several new or enhanced initiatives will be implemented for the 2024 local government elections. These are summarised as follows, further detail is provided later in the document:

- > centralisation of the public enquiry service
- > centralisation of the issuing of replacement votes
- > improved design, tracking and handling of ballot papers
- > improved candidate guidance and services
- > specific engagement campaigns for voters affected by the change in entitlements.

The VEC will evaluate the effect, impact, and success of new initiatives. (see page 15)

Electoral Integrity

The planning, delivery, and evaluation of the 2024 local government election program focuses on robust integrity and decision-making measures at all levels of the organisation. These measures will focus on election office and head office compliance, as well as specific activities vital for election result integrity.

Complaints management

Complaints management is an important component of election delivery. A dedicated team will manage feedback and complaints from the public received in writing by one of 3 channels:

- > online submission form
- > email
- > post.

Complaints alleging a breach of the law should include any available evidence. Complaints lodged with election offices will be forwarded to our head office for review and appropriate action. This may include referral to the relevant council or regulator.

The Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) is the regulator for local government. We will refer relevant complaints directly to LGI and advise the customer of this action.

Customer confidentiality is protected. The VEC's customer feedback policy and customer service charter are available on our website at vec.vic.gov.au/complaints.

The VEC will ensure all complaints and enquiries are responded to appropriately and within acceptable timeframes. (see page 15)

Disputing election results

The validity of an election can only be disputed by an application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) within 14 days of the declaration of the result of an election.

Section 311 of the Act allows either a candidate, 10 persons entitled to vote at the election or the VEC, to dispute the validity of a local government election by an application to VCAT for review.

Following the 2020 elections, 9 applications were made to VCAT in relation to 8 separate elections. Seven applications were made by individual candidates, one application was made by a group of at least 10 voters, and one application was made by the Electoral Commissioner.

The cost of our involvement in these reviews will be shared between the VEC and the relevant council as a contingency cost under the election service agreement. For each election subject to an application, we will report to the council on the proceeding and the recovery of costs.

In developing our cost recovery model for VCAT proceedings, we note that while applications do not necessarily impugn the conduct of the VEC or the Election Manager, we expect to be listed as a party to any proceedings. We will not seek to recover the cost if we are found by VCAT to be at fault and we may choose to absorb a portion of costs where an application to VCAT provides an opportunity to build electoral knowledge or clarify electoral law.

In circumstances where the VEC is a party to legal proceedings, we will be represented by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, with legal counsel engaged as required.

Storage and disposal of ballot paper

We manage the security and storage of ballot material in accordance with regulation 79 of the Regulations. After the declaration of the election results, Election Managers will package all ballot papers and other materials used at the election in sealed security boxes. The boxes will be clearly labelled to indicate contents, the council and ward (if applicable) and the date of the election. Head office staff will then register this material in our records system before returning it to our warehouse for secure storage.

The disposal of ballot material is governed by retention and disposal authorities issued by the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) and standards issued by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC).

A certified copy of the electoral roll, as at the close of roll, is kept permanently, first by us, and then transferred to PROV as a state archive.

System security

The VEC has continued to strengthen its cyber security posture by implementing the Australian Signals Directorate Essential Eight maturity model (ASD8) and deployed a range of other best-in-class security technology such as protection from Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDOS) attacks.

Significant work has been completed over several phases, with extensive in-house and external security testing and assurance. This work has placed the VEC's cyber security posture in a strong position to protect electoral information and systems.

Reporting on the conduct of the 2024 local government elections

Council reports

We will provide each council with a report on the conduct of the election within 6 months of election day, as required by section 83 of the Regulations. A list of the data categories included in each council report can be found in **Appendix 13**.

Report to Parliament

Under section 8(2)(b) of the *Electoral Act 2002*, the VEC must report to Parliament within 12 months of the conduct of each election on the administration of that election. For the 2024 local government elections we will table our report no later than October 2025. The report includes:

The report includes:

- › analysis and summary of results and trends
- › selected detailed statistics (**see Appendix 13**)
- › acquittal or progress against recommendations from previous reports to Parliament
- › overview of the planning process
- › levels of key stakeholder satisfaction
- › details of the election budget
- › election administration, staffing and infrastructure
- › election services to voters and candidates
- › communication services
- › innovations and special projects
- › learnings from evaluation surveys and data analysis
- › summary of count processes and transparency measures.

The report may also provide details of any recommendations for legislative change or research topics, which will assist the conduct of future elections.

The VEC will ensure all reporting obligations are met.
(see page 15)

Electoral structure and ward boundary reviews

Electoral structure reviews are undertaken by an Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (ERAP). ERAPs are appointed by the Minister for Local Government and conduct electoral structure reviews in accordance with the Act. The reviews undertaken by ERAPs include consideration of the total number of councillors for each municipality; and the ward structure, including the number of wards (if subdivided), number of councillors per ward, ward boundaries and names.

On 11 October 2022, the Minister for Local Government announced the establishment of two ERAPs to undertake reviews of 39 local council electoral structures that were not compliant with the requirements of the Act. As required by legislation, the VEC provides administrative and technical services to the ERAPs.

The electoral structure reviews commenced in January 2023 and were completed in January 2024. The new electoral structures for all 39 local councils were gazetted by the Governor in Council in February 2024. The 2024 local government elections will be the first under the new electoral structures for many local councils.

Under Section 17(1) of the Act, on advice from the VEC, the Minister for Local Government also requested that we undertake ward boundary reviews for 10 local councils. These councils were subject to review as the number of voters per councillor in one or more wards varied, or was forecast to vary, by more than 10% from the average number of voters per councillor for all the wards for that council by the time of the general elections in October 2024. We commenced these ward boundary reviews in January 2024 and our recommended boundary adjustments were gazetted by the Governor in Council in May 2024. These ward boundary changes will be operationalised in June 2024 for the 2024 local government elections.

A list of the 49 local councils that were subject to an electoral structure review or ward boundary review in 2023-24 can be found in **Appendix 7**.

Election timeline

The local government elections timeline is defined in the Act and Regulations. Local government elections are held on the 4th Saturday in October every 4 years unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The election timeline for the 2024 local government elections is available in **Appendix 1**. The election timeline for the Melbourne City Council Leadership Team election is available in **Appendix 2** and the timeline for the Melbourne City Council Election of Councillors is available in **Appendix 3**.

The currently legislated timeline and dates throughout the plan will be paired with any proposed changes and highlighted in red. For further information on the proposed legislative amendments to the timelines, see **Appendix 4**.

A detailed timeline of key interactions between local councils and the VEC is available in **Appendix 5** to support councils in preparation for the 2024 local government elections.

Election service agreement and management

The election service agreement outlines the performance of our services, and council compliance and cooperation with obligations for the conduct and closure of each election. It also summarises contingency election services that may be required during the 2024-28 council term.

Cost management

Our election service agreements aim to ensure quality election services are delivered while keeping costs to a minimum.

The VEC will establish all election service agreements with local councils by 30 April 2024. (see page 15)

Although cost increases in some areas of the local government elections are unavoidable, we will look for efficiency opportunities to minimise cost increases where possible.

We will continue to apply a marginal cost recovery model where all direct costs are recovered. These costs include:

- > personnel and associated on-costs
- > stationery and material
- > equipment
- > mail processes
- > advertising and communications
- > printing
- > rent and utilities
- > insurances
- > IT infrastructure
- > licences that are costed to the election.

Our cost recovery model only includes head office or administrative costs associated with casual staff that are specifically employed for the local government elections.

We do not recover salaries for core staff working on the elections and overheads, such as head office and warehouse accommodation. Some marginal costs are also not recovered because we would be incurring the cost regardless of local government elections (such as depreciation of equipment and materials).

Several contingency costs will also be included in our costing program on a fee-for-service arrangement. It may not be possible to estimate the cost and provision for contingency services, which need to be factored into the election service agreement.

Examples of the contingency costs include being a party to a VCAT review and the enforcement of non-voting (infringements and any matters proceeding to prosecution).

There are also several other unanticipated costs that may arise during the election timeline, where a council requires a variation to the established parameters for the election (such as access to suitable election office for extraction and counting due to number of candidates or change in counting method from manual count to computer count – see 'Counting the votes' for more information).

In all cases, our Client Liaison Team will discuss contingency costs with the contact officers at councils affected.

A client liaison officer will be appointed to supervise the election service agreement for each council. They will communicate with council contacts and provide regular reports on the progress of the elections. Along with the Election Manager, the client liaison officer will be responsible for ensuring that the elections are conducted in accordance with the legislation.

External service providers

Many aspects of local government elections require the expertise of external service providers. Contracting these providers means our staff can focus on election-specific areas of expertise, ensuring that Victorians are provided with the highest quality election services, built on modern technology and systems.

For the 2024 local government elections, we will have service agreements and contracts in place for a range of specialist services, including:

- > Australia Post
- > ballot paper and ad-hoc printing services
- > cardboard furniture cartage and courier services
- > call centre services
- > election advertising
- > election staffing and labour hire
- > election staff online training
- > envelope production
- > information technology

- › mail house services
- › network security testing and cyber-security augmentation
- › site security assessment

Arrangements with other agencies

We will ensure that arrangements are in place to respond to any legal or regulatory issues arising during the election as set out below.

eSafety Commissioner

We will notify and engage with the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) prior to electoral events to share information about any specific concerns, trends, risks, intelligence or changes to legislation. We will refer matters to eSafety to seek assistance in removing seriously harmful online material in the context of elections. This material may include cyber abuse targeting an Australian adult, or content that promotes, incites, or instructs in matters of crime or violence through online services.

A joint referral protocol is in place between Australian members of the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) and eSafety to streamline the referral process.

Victorian Government Solicitor's Office

We will arrange with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO) to have legal counsel on stand-by throughout the election timeline, to ensure that any legal matters are dealt with promptly.

Local Government Inspectorate

The Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) is responsible for the examination, investigation and prosecution of any matter relating to council elections or electoral matters, and any possible breaches of the LG Act.

The VEC and the LGI are committed to maintaining a productive working relationship which supports robust and high-quality electoral practices at local government elections in Victoria. The LGI's responsibilities under the LG Act are to enforce and prosecute non-compliance. The VEC maintains a memorandum of understanding with the LGI to ensure the relationship is properly governed.

Victoria Police

We will engage with Victoria Police before and throughout the election timeline. Interactions with Victoria Police have been supported by more streamlined referral and response processes and reflect active engagement with police to build their understanding of electoral offences.

Evaluation and reporting

After the 2024 local government elections, we will conduct an in-depth evaluation to identify success against performance measures, capture lessons learned, and identify performance improvement opportunities through an established continuous improvement framework.

The VEC will implement a new evaluation framework. (see page 15)

As part of the evaluation, we will collect and analyse a range of data during and following the election, including feedback from internal and external stakeholders, election participants and our advisory groups.

We will evaluate stakeholder satisfaction with the delivery of the 2024 local government elections. This activity will include a sample of candidates who nominated for the election.

The VEC will evaluate the performance of its services and activities relevant to the planning and delivery of the local government election program (see page 15)

Informal ballot paper analysis

We will conduct a survey of informal ballot papers immediately after the elections. The aim of this 3-week process is to measure the incidence of various types of informal voting, and to contribute to Australia-wide literature on this subject.

Resource management and sustainability

We are committed to managing resources in a way that minimises environmental impact across its operations.

Examples include:

- › the provision of re-use and recycling facilities to all election venues
- › careful logistics planning to improve load efficiency and reduce carbon emissions associated with the transport of election materials across the State
- › paper reduction strategies such as reducing the amount of paper sent to election offices for election use, where possible moving instruction manuals to an online format, and the provision of electronic copies of reports where possible.

Measuring performance

To measure the overall success of the election and to determine whether our election delivery objectives have been met, the following key performance indicators have been developed. Data and evidence will be collected throughout the election period, with results summarised in the final Report to Parliament.

These performance measures are featured throughout the plan in blue.

Area	Target – measure
Service agreements	The VEC will establish all election service agreements with local councils by 30 April 2024.
Election offices	The VEC will establish election offices that are suitable and accessible.
Awareness and comms:	The VEC will ensure that statutory advertising is accurate and produced within legislative timeframes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Statutory advertising 	The VEC will ensure the communication plan objectives and benchmarks are achieved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > State awareness campaign 	The VEC will ensure new voting entitlements are adequately communicated to voters.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > New voting entitlements 	The VEC will provide support to councils to assist with new enrolment requirements.
Voters' rolls	The VEC will ensure the deadlines to produce voters' rolls are achieved. The VEC will assess and report on roll accuracy following the roll amendments period.
Candidates	The VEC will provide relevant information to assist prospective candidates. The VEC systems will support the efficient processing of nominations and candidate information.
Complaints and enquiries	The VEC will ensure all complaints and enquiries are responded to appropriately and within acceptable timeframes.
Ballot postage	The VEC will lodge all postal ballot material with Australia Post within the required timeframes.
Declarations	The VEC will declare all elections before 5 pm on Friday 15 November 2024.
Voter participation	The VEC will anticipate a turnout rate of >75% and record turnout rates by voter types. Turnout rates by voter type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > State > Council-entitlement types
Counting of votes	The VEC will conduct reconciliation and integrity checks to ensure correct recording of results during counting activities.

Area	Target – measure
Ballot security	The VEC will put procedures in place to ensure the secure packaging, movement, and storage of election material.
Trust in VEC procedures and processes	The VEC will establish and maintain robust election procedures so that no election can be overturned as a result of VEC procedures.
Evaluation	<p>The VEC will implement a new evaluation framework.</p> <p>The VEC will evaluate the performance of its services and activities relevant to the planning and delivery of the local government election program.</p> <p>The VEC will ensure all reporting obligations are met.</p> <p>The VEC will evaluate the effect, impact and success of new initiatives.</p>

Enrolment and close of rolls

Overview

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

We prepare the Electoral Commissioner's voters list (EC list) for council election purposes. This is the list of State voters that are enrolled in that local council area. Councils will prepare the Chief Executive Officer's voters list (CEO list). The EC list is merged with the CEO list to produce the voters' roll to be certified for each council election. The quality of the voters' roll and the timelines that apply for roll preparation are very tight for these elections. Changes to the way ratepayers enrol to vote increase pressure on councils and the VEC to review and process applications within the timeline. We will work with the local government sector to maximise preparedness and develop high-quality voters' rolls.

Ward structure and boundary changes

The register of electors will be updated with the new ward boundary changes in June 2024. New boundaries will be reflected against voter details in the 'Check My Enrolment' feature of our website after this date, as well as other online materials. Communication about the new boundaries will be available on the VEC website.

Entitlement to enrol

The 2024 local government elections will see a significant change in the enrolment of eligible ratepayers. This change completes the staged implementation of new entitlement arrangements, which were introduced in 2020. Owner ratepayers who are not enrolled as a State voter in the relevant council are no longer automatically enrolled for the election. There were over 350,000 voters enrolled in this category at the 2020 local government elections. Instead, all eligible owner ratepayers who are not enrolled as a State voter in the relevant council will need to apply to the council before the close of the roll to be included on the voters' roll for the election.

This change will apply to all councils except:

- › City of Casey and City of Whittlesea. A 2022 amendment to the Act requires that voters' rolls for these 2 councils will be prepared under the 2020 entitlement arrangements. Voters who were enrolled as non-resident owners at the 2016 local government elections and whose circumstances have not changed will be automatically enrolled by council

- › City of Melbourne, which has its own legislation and entitlements requirements (see page 34 for more information)
- › Moira Shire, which is currently under administration and will not hold a general election until 2028.

Councils were required to write to all ratepayers whose enrolment is expiring and invite them to apply for enrolment for the upcoming election by 31 May 2024. We supported this exercise by reviewing ratepayer lists during the first stage of roll production, providing mailing lists based on previous election information, and preparing common templates to help local councils prepare their mailing lists.

Local Government Victoria (LGV) published the VEC's guidance document detailing the entitlement changes and their impacts on enrolment. Councils need to ensure systems and resources to process applications from eligible ratepayers are available and in place. Ongoing advice will be provided to the sector and monitor readiness to provide accurate enrolment data within the timeframes required to produce voters' rolls for the election.

The VEC will provide support to councils to assist with new enrolment requirements. (see page 15)

A reference diagram outlining 'who can vote in the 2024 local government elections' for those affected by the changes is available in **Appendix 6**.

Roll production stages

Stage 1 – Pre-election roll products

Producing a high-quality voters' roll takes significant effort and resources from councils and the VEC and relies on sophisticated software and data matching tools.

We will again work to a 3-stage process of roll production. Stage 1 occurred from January to April 2024 and supported verification of ratepayer records and identification of ratepayers with expiring entitlements (see **Appendix 1**).

By participating in the preliminary process and investigating and acting on the reports provided from this activity before the date for the primary enrolment extract, those councils that participated will be in a good position to ensure a high-quality voters' roll. Councils are required to nominate a council officer to resolve data issues promptly during each of the roll processing periods.

Queries from local councils regarding the changes to enrolment entitlements can be directed to the rollsupport@vec.vic.gov.au.

Stage 2 – Enrolment eligibility checks

Stage 2 will commence in June 2024 and will create a draft voters' roll with applications received by council to date. It is critical that councils process enrolment applications as they are received to ensure there are no delays in creation of roll products at each stage.

Most councils will be required to provide a CEO trial list which is compliant with the VECs requirements by **14 June 2024**. A small number of councils will provide their CEO trial list by **8 July 2024** due to the timing of ward boundary reviews. The technical requirements for CEO trial lists have been communicated directly to council contacts.

The final time and date fixed for receipt of primary CEO data prior to the close of rolls is 5pm on **Monday 15 July 2024**. Updated CEO data can be provided at this time following council investigation and rectification of duplicate records, removal of any deceased voters and correction of any invalid data.

The VEC will ensure the deadlines to produce voters' rolls are achieved. (see page 15)

Stage 3 – Close of the roll

The roll for the election closes at 4 pm on Friday 30 August 2024*.

*Proposed: 4 pm Wednesday 7 August 2024

We work closely with the AEC to ensure that enrolment data received by the close of the roll is processed by the AEC within 24 hours.

Stage 3 will commence immediately after the close of the roll and will reflect applications and changes of entitlement that have occurred since Stage 2.

Key timeframes relating to the receipt of roll data from councils and the preparation of the voters' roll are included in the timeline – see **Appendix 5**. We will make requests to councils to provide information to us during these timeframes.

Councils must supply a stage 3 certification CEO list in the same format as the stage 2 primary enrolment data no later than 4 pm on Monday 2 September 2024*.

*Proposed: 4 pm Friday 9 August 2024

Voters updating their details in the weeks following the close of the roll will be contacted where possible and advised they are required to vote in the election for which they were enrolled as at the close of the roll.

The Act requires us to certify the voters' roll and make it available for public inspection. The roll will be certified on 19 September 2024* and will be available for inspection at our head office at Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne from the day of certification until Monday 25 November.

*Proposed: Monday 9 September 2024

The VEC will assess and report on roll accuracy following the roll amendments period. (see page 15)

Provision of election roll products

Election rolls may be provided to candidates, council CEO, or other people or organisations if requested under the Act. All recipients of election roll products will be reminded of their legislative obligations and the significant penalties for the misuse of roll data. They will be required to declare that the information will only be used for purposes authorised by the Act. Telephone and email details are not provided to any person as part of election roll product.

We will release rolls to other people and organisations only if there is a public interest that outweighs the public interest in protecting the privacy of roll information, and in consultation with OVIC.

We will contact candidates directly to remind them of their obligations to dispose of roll data following the election.

Communication and engagement

Information services

Public enquiry service (PES)

A centralised contact centre will be established from 15 July 2024 to respond to telephone enquiries. This will ensure consistency in messaging, early identification of themes and trends along with the opportunity to enable election offices to focus on election administration.

The call centre will also be responsible for emails received from voters during the local government elections. Any calls regarding CEO list applications will be referred to the relevant council.

If councils contact the PES requiring guidance or have enquiries they will be directed to contact their designated client liaison officer at the VEC.

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

Election offices will continue to take phone queries from local candidates.

Multi-language telephone interpreting service

A telephone multi-language information service will be available and have in-language pre-recorded election content upfront. Voters will be able to request an interpreter if they wish. We provide 20 dedicated language lines for the most widely spoken languages in Victoria, but the service can support up to 100 different languages.

The telephone interpreting and multi-language information service will operate throughout the election period.

This operates on a fee-for-service basis. Enquiries specific to a particular council election will be costed back to that council. Incoming calls are directed to an interpreter, who then links to us in a 3-way telephone conversation to relay information in the person's preferred language. These calls are charged in time block increments.

info@vec.vic.gov.au

People who prefer to engage with us online will be presented with a wide range of helpful information through the VEC website. If this does not successfully address their enquiry, people can email info@vec.vic.gov.au for a response. Our public enquiry service will address and respond to emails sent to info@vec.vic.gov.au, but any emails relating to CEO list applications will be forwarded to the relevant council.

Digital services

VoterAlert notification service

We offer an electronic notification service – VoterAlert – by email and/or SMS. State-enrolled voters subscribed for VoterAlert will receive enrolment and voting reminders.

State-enrolled voters living in electorates with uncontested, failed or incomplete elections will not receive voting reminders. They will receive a separate VoterAlert to advise them that they are not required to vote in the election.

61% of those enrolled on the State register of electors are opted-in to this service.

Unfortunately, VoterAlert does not capture council-enrolled voters.

Website

The VEC website will feature comprehensive local government elections information, updated at each phase of the election. Information will include:

- > enrolment options
- > how to apply to work at the election
- > how to nominate
- > information on candidates
- > how to complete your postal ballot pack
- > voting options for voters who are away from their address
- > how the votes are counted
- > a misinformation register to collate and debunk any incorrect or misleading election information
- > election results
- > translated election content for language pages (specific languages to be confirmed).

Information regarding changes to council enrolment entitlements will be published on the VEC website leading up to the election – to ensure early awareness of the changed requirements and processes.

The VEC will ensure new voting entitlements are adequately communicated to voters. (see page 15)

Election results will be published on our website and will include:

- > first preference results,
- > preference distribution results (including a downloadable spreadsheet report),
- > and the names of elected candidates.

Links to translated electoral information, including telephone numbers for the multi-language interpreting service are accessible from the home page of the VEC website.

We will position our website as the 'source of truth' for all election information.

Election venue locator

Our election venue locator is searchable by address or locality. The map will show the election office locations including details such as address, opening dates and times.

The election venue locator will be available from the VEC website from the opening of election offices on Wednesday 18 September*.

*Proposed: Monday 9 September 2024

Information for electors overseas

The VEC will provide information about the local government elections to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the Smart Traveller website. A link to the VEC's online information about voting options while overseas will also be included.

Advertising

Advertising campaign

An election advertising campaign will drive broad public awareness about participating in the 2024 local government elections. Each client liaison officer will work closely with our Communication Team, which manages the advertising and communication campaign.

The Communication Team will:

- > coordinate the development and placement of advertising
- > write and distribute media releases and social media posts
- > develop communication kits for councils

- > deliver the VoterAlert notification service
- > prepare election information for the VEC's website

The VEC will ensure the communication plan objectives and benchmarks are achieved. (see page 15)

The client liaison officers will forward copies of all voter information products to councils as they become available.

We will deliver a state-wide voter information campaign. The campaign will be developed to:

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

We will publish statutory public notices for each council that will comprise the following:

- > a 'close of the roll' advertisement: covering enrolment entitlements, how to enrol, how to check enrolment, and the close of the roll date
- > a 'notice of election' advertisement: including how to nominate, details of candidate information session/s (if applicable), and voting information including how to register for braille or large print ballot papers
- > a 'declaration of results' advertisement.

The VEC will ensure that statutory advertising is accurate and produced within legislative timeframes. (see page 15)

Mis- and disinformation

To combat election-related misinformation and disinformation campaigns, we will promote digital literacy and the critical consumption of election-related information and advertising from third parties. This will involve:

- > maintaining our existing misinformation register and updating it as needed during the election period
- > addressing electoral mis- and disinformation on social media in accordance with social media protocols
- > promoting our [Sorting fact from fiction](#) page which has advice, tips and resources for critically consuming information.

These initiatives are intended to address mis- and disinformation about electoral processes only, not political discourse or claims made as part of campaigning.

Media

Media releases

A series of media releases will provide journalists and media outlets across Victoria with key election information for their publications such as enrolment, nomination and voting information, key dates, facts and figures, VEC initiatives, and results publication timelines.

Social media

We will use social media platforms to convey key electoral information and continue to establish ourselves as an authoritative and trusted source of truth for all election-related enquiries. This will include proactively promoting key messages regarding the election using rich media such as gifs, videos, and infographics – as well as responding in a timely and accurate manner to queries received from the public.

Similarly, we will monitor and respond as necessary to emerging issues that arise via social media.

Education and inclusion services

Education and inclusion services are provided year-round to support enrolment and voting across the broad diversity of eligible Victorians. Our education and inclusion programs also form part of our priority community access and inclusion plans. These plans all include election-specific deliverables. See **Appendix 11** for further information.

We continue to work closely with a broad range of community stakeholders to ensure programs are relevant, appropriate, and informed by community needs and expectations. We regularly distribute our Be Heard newsletter to over 1,600 community stakeholders and liaise with members of the following advisory groups:

- › Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG) which represents a number of disability support agencies and individuals with lived experience
- › Prisons and Without a Home Advisory Group representing people experiencing homelessness or incarceration
- › Aboriginal Advisory Group
- › Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Advisory Group
- › Young People Advisory Group.

Each of these groups is involved in the design of our electoral education initiatives and each plan is published on the VEC website for transparency.

A leaflet supplied in a minimum of 20 languages (plus English) that explains, step-by-step, how to vote formally will be provided for voters in metropolitan councils (mandatory, provided at cost) and is optional for regional and rural councils (at cost). It also includes telephone interpreter numbers for each language (plus the one general number for any other languages). See **Appendix 12** for a list of languages.

Inclusion of people with disabilities

Our services for people living with disability will include but are not limited to braille and large print ballot papers and peer-to-peer electoral education sessions. This will aim to further enhance the support provided to people with disabilities to enrol and vote.

We will liaise with Vision Australia (Vic) to produce material to be sent to all Victorian voters on their database. The communication will make these voters aware that elections are occurring, and provide basic information about the elections, contact details for further information, and a phone number for those who wish to register for braille or large print ballot material.

Election office management

Election offices and venues

We will establish an election office within each local council. We will endeavour to source an office that is conveniently positioned for candidates and members of the public and meets accessibility, safety, and security standards.

A security audit will be completed for all election offices and count venues (including the centralised activity sites) with findings implemented by staff prior to operationalisation.

The VEC will establish election offices that are suitable and accessible. (see page 15)

Where a council has a space available for an election office on its own premises, or other premises owned or operated by council, we will work with council to determine its suitability, noting the security requirement that we must be the sole occupant during the election period. Where no suitable council property exists, we will secure a private lease for the election office.

Election offices will be clearly identified, with appropriate signage and security. We will check all access points and, where necessary, arrange for new locks to be fitted.

For the 2024 local government elections, we will require access to election offices by early August 2024 in order to deliver necessary furniture and materials and install and commission telephones and computers in time for the opening of the office.

We will arrange the collection of materials and equipment from election offices commencing Friday 8 November, with final collections taking place no later than Friday 29 November. Smaller election offices may be decommissioned earlier. We will prioritise decommissioning of election offices located within council provided venues.

Where required, we will establish Centralised Activity Sites (CAS). Some metropolitan wards may be counted here along with certain centralised activities such as replacement vote processing.

Public office hours

Election offices will be open to the public from Wednesday 18 September* until Friday 25 October. Election office opening hours will be standardised across the state and will operate from 9 am to 5 pm weekdays, except for the last two days before election day when election offices will close at 8 pm on Thursday 24 October and 6 pm on Friday 25 October. Standardised

election office hours assist with providing consistent messaging to voters through the advertising and communication campaign.

*Proposed: Monday 9 September 2024

Election management

The Electoral Commissioner will appoint an election manager for each of the 78 local government elections. Election managers are responsible for all activities undertaken within their election office and other venues to deliver the election for their council, including:

- > appointing and managing staff
- > In person inquiries
- > processing nominations from candidates
- > overseeing the receipt and processing of returned postal vote envelopes
- > overseeing counting activities conducted within their council
- > declaring results
- > overseeing the decommission of the election office.

Each election manager will be assisted by one or more assistant election managers.

Recruitment of senior election officials

Election managers and assistant election managers are selected and appointed from a pool of senior election officials (SEOs) who have been recruited to be available for these critical roles. While many members of the senior election official pool will have previous local government elections experience, others will have only worked in a State election, and some may be experiencing their first election management position.

Due to the combination of skills required, ability to commit to full time work many months in advance, and the geographic location of roles, recruiting enough suitably skilled and available SEOs in required locations can be challenging. We undertake recruitment drives annually to ensure sufficient SEOs are available for appointment.

Where we are not able to recruit SEOs in particular regions of the State, the VEC will pay accommodation and travel costs to relocate SEOs to ensure all positions are filled. We also utilise a secondment program to engage staff from other electoral commissions and Victorian Public Sector agencies and departments if required.

In addition to appointing SEOs directly into election manager and assistant election manager roles, a pool of reserve SEOs will be appointed so they are ready to step into any late vacancies.

Election casual staff

The election manager will appoint and manage temporary election staff to work in the election office and affiliated count venues to ensure the efficient conduct of their election. Election managers are provided with instructions and tools to enable them to appoint a diverse workforce, in particular to appoint people from across the entire adult age range, people who speak a range of languages and people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Election managers will be supported to appoint staff with disabilities and to make accommodations where possible, noting there are some limitations on accommodations that can be made due to the physical nature of much of the work.

We will also appoint temporary staff to conduct election activities at either head office or CAS locations. This will include the use of personnel sourced through staffing agencies under contracts we establish with these agencies.

We expect to appoint over 6,000 staff to work in temporary election roles across election offices, count venues, head office and CAS locations to support delivery of the elections.

Election manager training

Election managers and assistant election managers undertake a blended learning program comprised of online learning and face-to-face training.

The training program includes a comprehensive focus on the practical aspects of local government elections and the procedures that must be followed. Topics to be covered across the program include:

- › recruitment and training of staff
- › receipt and processing of nominations
- › processing returned postal vote envelopes
- › ballot paper management and accounting
- › conducting counts.

All reserve SEOs will undertake full election manager training.

Support for election managers

An election office help desk, staffed by call centre operators will be established along with a specialist team of election support officers (ESOs).

Help desk operators will provide support for issues relating to the operation of our Election Management System (EMS), personnel system, and other technical matters. Any support queries regarding procedural matters are referred to the ESO team.

ESOs will be appointed to act as line managers for election managers. ESOs perform a critical function during the delivery of an election. They are the point of contact between the election manager, the Electoral Commissioner, and other staff. ESO support for election managers covers all aspects of their performance including:

- › direction regarding election procedures
- › operational issues concerning venues, election materials, staffing, candidates and the public
- › guidance and coaching regarding planning and preparation for each phase of the election.

While support for election managers will primarily be provided remotely out of our head office, all ESOs will meet with their election managers face-to-face several times over the course of the election.

Employment support for election staff

The Personnel Helpline Team provides support to people wishing to register for election work, and appointed election staff who require support.

The team provides a phone and email service assisting with:

- › completing online registrations for election work (potential new staff)
- › understanding political and criminal conviction disclosure requirements
- › completing online training
- › accessing and navigating the election staff self-service portal to update
- › contact details, enter banking, tax and superannuation details, access pay advice and accept any offers of appointment
- › completing timesheets and resolving pay-related queries.

The service will operate during standard office hours. The service does not provide staff with support for queries regarding technical aspects of the conduct of their roles, as this support will be provided by relevant supervisors.

Candidates

Candidate information session

We will record information videos on key topics for candidates and make these available to view at any time. The videos will cover the nomination process and the procedures and rules relevant to candidates. The content will make clear that we are responsible for the conduct of the election and that election enquiries from prospective candidates should be directed to the VEC, not council staff.

Each election manager will hold an in person information session for candidates prior to the opening of nominations. This will be provided without charge.

Our client liaison officers will consult with councils to determine if another in person candidate information session is required. On a marginal cost recovery basis, councils may opt to conduct an additional in person information session to cover an additional town in the municipality. Councils should note that the content covered at the in person sessions will be substantially similar to the information presented online.

The VEC will provide relevant information to assist prospective candidates. (see page 15)

Nominations

Nominations open on Thursday 19 September*

***Proposed: Monday 9 September 2024**

and close at 12 noon on Tuesday 24 September*.

***Proposed: 12 noon on Tuesday 17 September 2024**

Election managers will receive and record nominations from candidates at the election office. This includes receiving the \$250 nomination fee.

In advance of the close of the roll, candidates are strongly encouraged to make sure they have confirmed their eligibility to nominate. This is particularly relevant given the changing entitlement schemes in place at the 2024 local government elections. Our nomination process will involve checking the candidate's enrolment against the certified roll.

Candidates will be able to create their nomination forms online from Candidate Helper, accessible from the VEC website, but must lodge their hard copy nomination form in person with the election manager.

The use of Candidate Helper is strongly encouraged as it enables candidates to step through the nomination process, including submitting their candidate statement and photograph. This expedites the nomination appointment process as election managers can retrieve this data to upload it into EMS via a unique identifier on the nomination forms.

The VEC systems will support the efficient processing of nominations and candidate information. (see page 15)

The list of candidates who have nominated for each local government election will be regularly updated on the VEC website. Candidates' names and public contact details, where provided, will appear soon after a full quality assurance process has been successfully completed for their nomination. We anticipate updates to the lists of candidates on the VEC website to be made twice daily on each day during the nomination period.

Draw for position on ballot paper

Close of nominations for candidates is 12 noon on Tuesday 24 September*.

***Proposed: 12 noon Tuesday 17 September 2024**

Election managers will hold a ballot draw to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot paper as soon as possible after the close of nominations (anticipated to be from 3 pm on Tuesday 24 September*).

***Proposed: 10 am Wednesday 18 September 2024**

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

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

Candidate statements and photographs

As part of the nomination process, election managers will receive candidates' personal statements and photographs to be included in the ballot pack sent to voters. Candidates are strongly encouraged to create their candidate statements and upload their photographs into Candidate Helper and bring all documentation to their nomination appointment. This will streamline the process for loading information into our election management system and will enable candidates to complete all steps in the nomination process in a single appointment.

The candidate handbook will provide clear information on the requirements for preparing and submitting statements and photographs, such as candidate statements having a word limit of 200 words. Election managers will not assist candidates with the preparation of their statement content.

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

Each individual candidate can lodge a candidate statement and photograph by no later than 12 noon on 25 September*, the Wednesday after the ballot draw.

*Proposed: 12 noon Tuesday 17 September 2024, to be followed by the ballot draw at 10 am Wednesday 18 September

Candidate questionnaires

As part of the nomination process, election managers will receive answers to candidate questionnaires completed by candidates.

Like candidate statements, candidates will be able to complete their candidate questionnaire forms using Candidate Helper before lodging it with the Election Manager. Candidates are strongly encouraged to bring this to their nomination appointment.

Each individual candidate can lodge a candidate questionnaire by no later than 12 noon on 25 September*, the Wednesday after the ballot draw.

*Proposed: 12 noon Tuesday 17 September 2024, to be followed by the ballot draw at 10 am Wednesday 18 September

Supplying a candidate questionnaire is voluntary. The completed questionnaires will be accessible to voters on the VEC website and available in election offices.

We will publish advice showing which candidates did not lodge answers to the candidate questionnaire or did not answer any particular question.

Candidate enquiries and support

We will operate a candidate helpdesk at head office in advance of the election so that prospective candidates can direct their enquiries and receive assistance with their nominations prior to the opening of the election office. This includes support with using Candidate Helper, digital tool for the pre-completion of nomination forms. From the opening of the election office, Election Managers will personally deal with all enquiries from candidates for their own council.

Candidate handbooks will be made available online and through the election office. We strongly encourage prospective candidates to use Candidate Helper and the VEC website for election information.

Refund of nomination fees

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

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

Ballot material

The preparation and printing of ballot material for local government elections is a large and complex task. Our contracted direct mail provider and Australia Post have extensive experience in elections, having been engaged by the VEC for previous major electoral events.

Our 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 the process to ensure integrity, compliance, and accuracy.

Postal ballot pack contents

Ballot packs sent to voters will contain the below items to enable the postal voting process:

Ballot paper

Ballot paper artwork is colour-coded for each ward to improve the efficiency of sorting processes.

Candidate statements

Each ballot pack will contain a printed document containing candidate statements from each of the candidates within the electorate.

Multi-language voting instructions leaflet

The multi-language leaflet will be included in the postal ballot pack as standard for all metropolitan councils. The product is also encouraged for any other local councils using postal voting that have a high number of voters from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Declaration envelope

The ballot paper declaration envelope has been designed for use at local government elections conducted by post and conform to the Regulations. The envelopes are designed so that their contents are not visible through the security lining and the declaration flap can be separated from the envelope by election officials before the ballot paper is extracted.

Reply-paid envelope

We will establish a unique reply-paid number for each ward in the council and each unsubdivided council. The reply-paid envelope will be colour-coded to match the ballot paper. This facilitates pre-sorting of the envelopes to wards by Australia Post and maximises the accuracy of the sorting.

Outer envelope

The outer envelope is branded so that voters easily recognise that the envelope contains official election material. All outer envelope stock containing ballot material will show the Australia Post "PRIORITY" indicator for priority service delivery.

Ballot paper barcodes to identify council and ward

For this election we will introduce council and ward specific barcodes on all components of the postal ballot pack including the ballot paper sent to each voter. The barcode will not identify a voters individual ballot papers. This initiative aims to enhance the integrity of the postal ballot pack creation process. The decision responds to the increased number of overall wards participating in the 2024 local government elections and the separation of the ballot paper and the candidate statement. Importantly, a list of all barcodes will be visible on our website, and a proactive communication plan will inform voters about its introduction, aiming to address any voter concerns.

Ballot pack preparation and distribution

Artwork for ballot papers and candidate statements will be generated using our automation tool. This tool selects from a range of pre-defined artwork templates and populates them with the relevant candidate information directly from the election management system's database. Following an extensive quality assurance process, print-ready artwork files will be securely transmitted directly to our contracted ballot material printer ready for production.

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

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

*Proposed: 4 days for the lodgement of ballot packs with Australia Post

Australia Post has supported us in the past and is confident it can continue to deliver the same support model successfully and executed to date. We believe that Australia Post is committed to maintaining the effective, consistent, and reliable postal service on which we rely, following assurances given by the Chief Executive Officer of Australia Post.

The VEC will lodge all postal ballot material with Australia Post within the required timeframes. (see page 15)

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

Uncontested leaflets

Voters in uncontested wards will receive a leaflet informing them that their election is uncontested and they are not required to vote. The leaflet will provide the name of the candidate(s) who nominated and will be declared elected. The uncontested leaflet is sent to reduce confusion among voters who were aware of the election but did not receive a ballot pack.

Where a subdivided council is entirely uncontested, a notice in the council's nominated local press will replace the uncontested election leaflet.

State-enrolled voters enrolled in uncontested wards who have opted-in to VoterAlert will also be sent a VoterAlert message by SMS, email, or both to advise them that the election is uncontested. The VEC will absorb the cost of this and there will be no additional cost to councils for this service.

Ballot material security

Physical security and integrity are critical aspects of our election design and election materials are strictly controlled.

Interfering with ballot material is a serious offence managed under sections 294 and 296 of the Act. Those found guilty of committing such an offence are liable for a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years, or a fine of 600 penalty units.

The VEC will put procedures in place to ensure the secure packaging, movement, and storage of election material. (see page 15)

Custody and control of returned ballot material

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

Our ballot paper tracking and security policy has been strengthened to further improve its transparency in the management of ballot papers throughout the election.

Select indicators will be provided to third party suppliers to report against during the event to alert us of any operational issues in real time.

Election managers will ensure daily reconciliation of mail received and supervise the scanning of ballot paper envelopes through our election management system to record their return.

Voting

Postal voting

The 2024 local government elections will be conducted entirely by post, with all voters automatically receiving their ballot packs to their registered postal address.

Voters complete their ballots and declarations and return these by post to us for counting. Voters use the priority reply-paid envelope for the return of their ballot paper envelope containing their completed ballot. The return mail is delivered to each election office from local postal facilities or mail distribution centres. Our service arrangement with Australia Post allows returned mail to be pre-sorted into wards where applicable, before being received by the election manager.

Voters can also hand-deliver their completed vote to any election office and place their ballot paper envelope into a ballot box in person. These must be returned to the election office in the council in which the voter has their entitlement.

As ballot paper envelopes are returned to the election office they are recorded in our election management system, then batched and stored in a secure location until after the close of voting.

The VEC will anticipate a turnout rate of >75% and record turnout rates by voter types. (see page 15)

Replacement votes

In some instances, voters may require a replacement vote to be sent to them. This can be due to:

- › not receiving a ballot pack
- › losing or spoiling the ballot pack
- › their ballot pack going to a post office box nominated, but which is no longer in use
- › being at a different address to where the ballot pack was sent.

Voters can request a replacement vote by completing an online application form or contacting us by phone. A centralised team will process applications and mail replacement ballot packs to the postal address provided. Voters also have the option to attend the election office in the council for which they hold entitlement, to have a replacement vote issued over the counter.

The details of all replacement votes issued and returned are recorded in EMS. This lets the election manager to make sure no voter has more than one ballot paper admitted to the count.

Voting at the election office

If an elector requires their ballot pack to be issued prior to the general mailout, they may request an early vote. The elector must provide a reason for such request, for example being away from their address for the duration of the election. Early votes can be issued from *Wednesday 25 September 2024, after the completion of the ballot draw, by attending an election office.

*Proposed: Wednesday 18 September 2024

In addition, voters who have not received their original or replacement ballot pack in the last few days before election day are encouraged to attend the election office in person to ensure they are able to cast a vote prior to the close of voting.

Election officials will undertake a process to issue a replacement vote in person in line with the procedures above for postal replacement votes.

Voters must cast their vote at the election office in the council for which they hold an entitlement and cannot vote at any other location.

Counting the votes

Counting methods

In local government elections, two methods of counting are used to determine the result:

Preferential counts

Preferential counts are used for single vacancy wards. Most preferential counts will be counted manually but some that have high enrolment and a high number of candidates, may use a computer count. Preferential counts will be conducted only until an absolute majority has been reached.

Proportional representation (PR) counts

Proportional representation is used to determine the result in wards (or unsubdivided municipalities) involving multiple vacancies. We will conduct all PR counts using our computer count software.

Preparing for the count

Before any votes can be counted, they must first be deemed eligible for inclusion in the count. This includes checking that declaration envelopes have been signed by the voter, or in the case of a disadvantaged voter signed by an authorised person, and that they are dated on or before the close of voting. Further checks are undertaken to determine eligibility in cases where more than one vote appears to have been returned from the same voter, or where unenrolled votes have been issued.

Declaration envelopes deemed eligible after these scrutiny procedures can have their ballot papers extracted following the close of voting. Eligible envelopes are first run through a letter opening machine to separate the identifying declaration flap from the envelope. Envelopes are then run through the machine a second time to open them. Teams of election officials carefully remove ballot papers and batch them. The number of ballot papers and envelopes is reconciled before any empty or rejected envelopes are removed from the extraction area.

Postal votes can be received until 12 noon on Friday 1 November. This extended postal vote receipt period means that extraction activities will take place in two stages. The first stage, referred to as Group A, will take place after the close of voting and comprises of returned votes from the general mail-out where the vote has been received before the close of voting and the original ballot pack is the only vote issued to, and returned by, the voter.

The second phase, known as Group B, will take place after the close of the extended period, when all votes that can be considered for inclusion in the count have been received. It will comprise of votes from the general

mailout received after the close of voting but signed and dated no later than the close of voting, as well as all eligible replacement votes and unenrolled votes. At this time, the election manager will also complete processing of all braille and large print ballot paper envelopes received in the election office. They will generate a report to identify any envelopes where more than one ballot pack appears to have been returned for the same voter and will action each return as prescribed.

At each phase, the relevant ballot paper envelopes proceeding to extraction are located and dealt with by election managers in accordance with the Regulations. No extraction can take place until these processes are complete.

A balance figure will also be established for each ward (or unsubdivided municipality) to confirm that all eligible envelopes have been processed and that the number of ballot papers proceeding to the count is correct.

Unenrolled vote checking

Declarations completed by unenrolled voters will be checked progressively during the voting period and finalised as soon as practicable after election day. We will support election managers with determining the entitlement of unenrolled declarations and will coordinate the checking process with councils as necessary.

Counting activities

We will work with election managers to determine counting arrangements for each council. Given the two stages of extraction, counting activities will occur in two phases following both the Group A and Group B extraction. Election managers will advise candidates of counting arrangements before close of voting, including the number of staff that will be involved.

Candidates are not entitled to attend the extraction and counting of votes, but they may appoint scrutineers to represent them at these activities and observe them on their behalf. We will publish a comprehensive *Scrutineer handbook* that will outline the roles and responsibilities of scrutineers. It will be provided to candidates as well as published on the VEC website. Candidates are strongly encouraged to ensure that scrutineers are appropriately briefed before they undertake any scrutineer duties.

It should be noted that in some circumstances, extraction and/or counting activities may need to take place in a venue other than the election office. Councils will be contacted by their client liaison officer should this be required in their council area, and candidates will be notified when the election manager advises them of counting arrangements before close of voting.

Manual counts

Where the count is to be conducted manually in a single-vacancy ward, ballot papers are sorted to first preference by candidate, or informal, based on what is marked on the ballot paper. The total number of informal and first preference votes per candidate are then tallied.

When all ballot papers from the Group A and Group B extractions have been counted, the election manager will establish if any candidate has received an absolute majority of first preference votes (i.e. more than 50% of the total formal ballot papers). Where no candidate receives an absolute majority of first preference votes, a preference distribution will take place.

Preference distributions involve excluding the candidate with the least votes and transferring each of their ballot papers to the remaining candidates in the order of the preferences marked on the ballot papers. This process is repeated until one of the remaining candidates reaches an absolute majority of the vote.

After each distribution, ballot papers from the excluded candidate are checked that they have been sorted to the correct remaining candidates, and the total number of ballot papers is reconciled.

The VEC will conduct reconciliation and integrity checks to ensure correct recording of results during counting activities. (see page 15)

The election manager will appoint sufficient staff to form one or more counting teams to distribute preferences. A trained election official will be appointed as team leader for each counting team.

It is anticipated that all manual counts will be finalised by Wednesday 13 November.

Results for manual counts will be displayed on the VEC website at the completion of preference distributions.

Computer counts

Where the count is to be conducted by computer, either in a multi-vacancy ward or unsubdivided municipality or where a preferential count by computer is required, ballot papers are sorted during extraction activities to remove those that are obviously informal. The remaining ballot papers are batched in preparation for data entry. Once batching has been completed, ballot paper batches, as well as the obvious informal votes, will be sealed and secured for transport to the computer count venue (if away from the election office).

At a computer count, the preferences shown on each ballot paper are entered into our computer count software by data entry operators. The application checks each ballot paper for formality.

Only formal ballot papers are saved to the database. Once all formal ballot papers have been entered into the system, and the number of informal votes totalled, the results can be calculated.

Ballot papers identified as obviously informal during extraction activities will be fully rechecked while data entry takes place. Any informal votes deemed to be formal during this checking process will be added into the data entry process, and any informal ballot papers identified during data entry will also undergo a formality check and will be added back into the data entry process if deemed formal during this process.

We will establish the computer infrastructure required for the conduct of all computer counts, which are expected to be completed in election offices in regional municipalities and at a centralised location where the council is based in or on the fringe of the Melbourne metropolitan area. An information session will also be published on the VEC website in the week before close of voting to explain the computer count process in detail. Candidates and their scrutineers will be encouraged to view this session to ensure they understand the process and the scrutineer's role. .

We anticipate data entry will commence for some computer counts from Monday 28 October, but some counts will start later. Results will be calculated for each council at the completion of data entry for all wards in that council (or when data entry is complete in an unsubdivided council). We expect that all computer counts will be completed by Wednesday 13 November. Results will be displayed on the VEC website as soon as possible after the completion of calculations for all wards in a particular council, including the distribution reports.

We will establish centralised computer count venues where metropolitan wards may be counted.

Recounts

At any time before a candidate has been declared elected, the election manager may open any sealed parcel containing ballot papers and recount the ballot papers. This can be done at the election manager's discretion, or a candidate may also request a recount in writing, specifying the reasons they believe a recount should be conducted.

In deciding to conduct a recount, the VEC will consider:

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

Our head office will support the election manager to ensure that all relevant checks and balances have taken place prior to the commencement of any recount.

Once the result is declared, the only option to challenge the result is through an application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

The VEC will establish and maintain robust election procedures so that no election can be overturned as a result of VEC procedures. (see page 15)

Declaration of the result

Election managers are required to publicly declare the election and to announce the name of all elected candidates.

Elections will be declared as soon as possible once the result has been determined and we have confirmed that no residual counting activity could possibly change the successful candidate. Candidates will be advised of the date, time, and location of the declaration.

We will advise election managers to allow a minimum of 4 hours for candidates to consider the provisional results prior to declaration to decide if they wish to request a recount. Election managers will advise candidates at the completion of the count if the proposed declaration time needs to be extended to allow for this requirement.

We expect that election managers will complete all declarations by Friday 15 November. This is in line with the 2020 elections.

The VEC will declare all elections before 5 pm on Friday 15 November 2024. (see page 15)

Compulsory voting enforcement

Under section 266 of the Act, we are required to carry out voting enforcement for all councils at local government elections. Regulation 86 of the Regulations determines that the VEC must, within 6 months after election day, send by post to those who appear not to have voted a notice asking why they did not vote. The non-voter enforcement process commences in early February 2025.

The process will consist of 4 stages. The first 3 stages will be conducted by the VEC, with the final enforcement stage managed by Fines Victoria.

During each stage of the process, we will update each council and provide statistical information regarding the number of apparent failure to vote notices issued, apparent non-voters who have replied, paid the fine, been excused, not been excused or who have not replied to the notice, and the number of infringements references to Fines Victoria.

The first step in the process is a requirement of the Act and the remaining steps are relevant to provisions of the *Infringements Act 2006*.

The Act also allows the prosecution of non-voters who do not satisfactorily respond during the enforcement process.

We are equipped with the systems to manage non-voter follow through up to, and including, prosecution. It is compulsory for all voters enrolled under Division 1 to vote in their relevant election.

List of non-voters

We will prepare the list of non-voters in accordance with the Regulations. This includes the exclusion of any non-voters who are automatically exempt from compulsory voting.

Stage 1 – Apparent failure to vote notice

We will prepare and send an apparent failure to vote notice (AFTVN) to those who appear to have failed to vote in the election and are not automatically exempt. It is anticipated we will be able to dispatch these notices in early February 2025.

Stage 2 – Infringement notice

The *Infringements Act 2006* sets out the steps to be followed at the infringement notice stage of enforcement.

We 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 infringement notice. Non-voters must either pay the penalty in full by the due date or they may seek a payment plan. A penalty applies to this notice and will be collected on behalf of council.

During the infringement notice stage, non-voters may seek a review of the infringement. A request for a review may result in the infringement being withdrawn.

A withdrawal of infringement letter must be mailed to each non-voter in this category where an internal review results in the withdrawal of the infringement. This will be an additional cost to councils.

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

Stage 3 – Penalty reminder notice

We will prepare and send a penalty reminder notice to those apparent non-voters who, at the conclusion of the infringement notice stage have not paid the penalty for failing to vote. The original penalty and a penalty reminder notice fee applies to this notice and will be collected on behalf of council. Non-voters continue to have the same review and hearing options available as at the infringement notice stage.

A withdrawal of infringement letter must be mailed to each non-voter in this category where an internal review results in the withdrawal of the infringement. This will be an additional cost to councils.

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

Stage 4 – Lodgement with Magistrates' Court and Fines Victoria

At the end of the enforcement program, we will commence proceedings against any non-voter that elected to have their matter heard in the Magistrates' Court.

We will also collate all outstanding infringements and prepare and lodge a final court file with Fines Victoria within the prescribed timeframe.

Costs will be incurred for matters referred to the Magistrates' Court and will be passed on to council. Prior to lodging these matters with the Magistrates' Court, every step will be taken to ensure that only genuine requests proceed to court.

Prosecution of non-voters at the Magistrates' Court and through Fines Victoria involve significant time and resources. Matters referred to the Court and Fines Victoria can be expected to continue into subsequent financial years (i.e. beyond 2024-25).

Receipt of penalties

We will receive and record all payments made in relation to compulsory voting enforcement. At the conclusion of the enforcement program, all penalty payments collected for the 2024 local government elections will be transferred to the relevant council. Council will be provided with the penalties received from non-voters at an agreed time.

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

Melbourne City Council elections

Background and purpose

This chapter of the plan is specific to Melbourne City Council elections and should be read in conjunction with the rest of the plan.

Legal framework

The Melbourne City Council election will be held on Saturday 26 October 2024. We are responsible for the conduct of their general election, by-elections, and countbacks. Melbourne City Council elections are governed primarily by the Act and Regulations read in conjunction with:

- › *City of Melbourne Act 2001* (the CoM Act) and *City of Melbourne (Electoral) Regulations 2022* (the CoM Regulations): sets out the process for the election of councillors, lord mayor and deputy lord mayor to the Melbourne City Council and voters' roll entitlements.

Election timeline

The election timeline for Melbourne City Council elections is different from the timeline for all other local government elections. The Melbourne City Council leadership team election, that is the election for the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, is available in **Appendix 2** and the timeline for the election of councillors is available in **Appendix 3**.

The currently legislated timeline and dates throughout the plan will be paired with any proposed changes and highlighted in red. For further information on the proposed legislative amendments to the timelines, see **Appendix 4**.

Voters' roll

In accordance with the specific requirements of the *City of Melbourne Act 2001*, the City of Melbourne is responsible for compiling voters' rolls for Melbourne City Council elections. This is different from the arrangements for all other local government elections.

The VEC is still responsible for preparing the Electoral Commissioner's voters list (EC list), and will provide this to the City of Melbourne to compile the voters' roll.

The VEC is committed to working closely with the City of Melbourne to ensure a high quality voters' roll is ready to be certified by the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Melbourne.

A reference diagram outlining '2024 Melbourne City Council elections – enrolment and entitlement information' is available in **Appendix 7**.

Entitlement to enrol

There has been no change to enrolment entitlements for Melbourne City Council elections.

Communication and engagement

We will engage with the City of Melbourne to successfully provide all communication and engagement services as consistent with all other councils. These services will include the following:

- › Information services
- › Digital services
- › Advertising
- › Media
- › Education and inclusion services

Election office management

We will engage with the City of Melbourne to successfully provide suitable and accessible election offices with committed election staff and support as consistent with all other councils.

A security audit will be completed for the election office and count venue (including the centralised activity site) with findings implemented by staff prior to operationalisation.

Candidates

Nominations

Nominations open on Thursday 19 September*

*Proposed: Monday 9 September 2024

and close at 12 noon on Tuesday 24 September*.

*Proposed: 12 noon Tuesday 17 September 2024

The election manager will receive and record nominations from candidates at the election office. This includes receiving the \$250 nomination fee.

In advance of the close of the roll, candidates are strongly encouraged to make sure they have confirmed their eligibility to nominate. Our nomination process will involve checking the candidate's enrolment against the certified roll.

Candidates can nominate for the leadership team election or as a councillor, but not both. There are two different nomination forms. Leadership teams can lodge a request for a team name to appear on the ballot paper. Councillors can apply to be grouped and have a group name, which appears above-the-line on the ballot paper.

Candidates will be able to create their nomination forms online from Candidate Helper, accessible from the VEC website, but must lodge their hard copy nomination form in person with the Election Manager.

The use of Candidate Helper is strongly encouraged as it enables candidates to step through the nomination process, including submitting their candidate statement and photograph. This expedites the nomination appointment process as the Election Manager can retrieve this data to upload it into the VEC election management system via a unique identifier on the nomination forms.

The list of candidates who have nominated for each local government election will be regularly updated on the VEC website. Candidates' names and public contact details, where provided, will appear soon after a full quality assurance process has been successfully completed for their nomination. We anticipate updates to the lists of candidates on the VEC website to be made twice daily on each day during the nomination period.

Draw for position on ballot paper

Close of nominations for candidates is 12 noon on Tuesday 24 September*.

***Proposed: 12 noon Tuesday 17 September 2024**

The ballot draw for Melbourne City Council elections is two days after close of nominations, and will take place after 3 pm on Thursday 26 September* which is the same day as close of councillor group and leadership team name registration.

***Proposed: Thursday 19 September 2024**

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

The leadership team draw is conducted first, which determines the order in which pairs of candidates appear

on the ballot paper. The councillors' draw is conducted second and comprises two parts. First, the order of grouped candidates that appear above-the-line as well, followed by the order of ungrouped candidates below-the-line on the ballot paper. Ungrouped candidates do not get a box above-the-line.

The computer draw for councillors allocates grouped and ungrouped councillors automatically, but if a manual draw is needed, the election manager will need to do one draw for grouped and one draw for ungrouped.

Statements and photographs

During the nomination period, the election manager will receive statements and photographs from Leadership teams, groups and ungrouped candidates to be included in the ballot pack sent to voters. Candidates are strongly encouraged to create their candidate statements and upload their photographs into Candidate Helper and bring all documentation to their nomination appointment. This will streamline the process for loading information into our election management system and will enable candidates to complete all steps in the nomination process in a single appointment.

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

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

The leadership team candidates and grouped councillor candidates may submit a team or group statement of no more than 350 words. Ungrouped councillors can submit their own individual statement of no more than 300 words*.

***Proposed: candidate statement word limit to be reduced to 250 words for group and team statements and 200 words for ungrouped candidate statements**

Leadership team candidates may submit individual photos for Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor. Grouped councillors may submit individual photos for each group member. Ungrouped councillor candidates may submit an individual photo. They can be submitted by no later than the 30 September*, being the Monday after the ballot draw.

***Proposed: Monday 23 September 2024**

Group Voting Tickets and indications of preferences

Candidates for Melbourne City Council elections are also able to provide group voting tickets or indications of preferences to be included in the ballot pack mailed to voters.

All candidates will be provided with a Group Voting Ticket or indication of preference template after the ballot draw has been conducted. Grouped candidates can provide up to two group voting tickets which will be applied to the counting of votes where a voter has placed a 1 in the box above that group.

Leadership teams and ungrouped candidates can provide an indication of preferences to be published in the ballot pack sent to voters which shows the order of preferences they recommend voters use to fill in their ballot paper.

Group voting tickets and indications of preferences can be submitted to the election manager by no later than 30 September*, being the Monday after the ballot draw.

*Proposed: Monday 23 September 2024

Candidate questionnaires

As part of the nomination process, the Election Manager will receive answers to candidate questionnaires completed by candidates.

Like candidate statements, candidates will be able to complete their candidate questionnaire forms using Candidate Helper before lodging it with the Election Manager. Candidates are strongly encouraged to bring this to their nomination appointment.

Each individual candidate can lodge a candidate questionnaire by no later than 12 noon on 30 September*, the Monday after the ballot draw. Group voting tickets and indication of preferences for ungrouped councillors, and the indication of preferences for the leadership team can be submitted by no later than 30 September*, the Monday after the ballot draw.

*Proposed: Monday 23 September 2024

Supplying a candidate questionnaire is voluntary. The completed questionnaires will be accessible to voters on the VEC website and available in election offices. We will publish advice showing which candidates did not lodge answers to the candidate questionnaire or did not answer any particular question.

Candidate enquiries and support

We will operate a candidate helpdesk at head office in advance of the election so that prospective candidates can direct their enquiries and receive assistance with their nominations prior to the opening of the election office. This includes support with using Candidate Helper, digital tool for the pre-completion of nomination forms. From the opening of the election office, the election manager will personally deal with all enquiries from candidates for their own council.

Dedicated versions of the Candidate Handbook and Scrutineer Handbook for Melbourne City Council elections will be made available online and through the election office. We strongly encourage prospective candidates to use Candidate Helper and the VEC website for election information.

Ballot material

Ballot papers

Voters in Melbourne City Council elections will receive two ballot papers, one for the leadership election and one for the councillor election.

The leadership team election ballot paper lists the names of each of the candidates running as pairs, the position in the leadership team each candidate within the pair is running for, and the team's name, if lodged.

The councillor election ballot paper is similar to the ballot paper for a Legislative Council (Upper House) election, which offers both above-the-line and below-the-line options.

Candidate statements

Voters will receive one booklet containing:

- › Leadership team
 - statements
 - photographs
 - indications of preferences
- › Councillor
 - group and ungrouped candidate statements
 - photographs
 - group voting tickets and indication of preferences.

Counting the votes

There will be two methods of counting used to determine the result of the Melbourne City Council elections:

Preferential count (leadership team election)

Preferential counts are used for single vacancy elections. The Melbourne City Council leadership team is elected as a pair—a single vacancy. The election will be counted by computer data entry.

Proportional representation (PR) count (Councillor election)

Proportional representation is used to determine the result for the Melbourne City Council election of councillors. We will conduct this count by computer data entry.

Appendices

Appendix 1: 2024 local government elections timeline

2024 LOCAL GOVERNMENT GENERAL ELECTIONS				
ELECTION TIMELINE				
COUNTDOWN				
PROPOSED	MON	15 JUL	103	Council primary enrolment data (date fixed by VEC)
SAT	27 JUL	SAT	10 AUG	Public notice of Close of the Roll Date (published during this period)
		FRI	16 AUG	
			77	
			71	
WED	7 AUG	FRI	30 AUG	Close of the roll at 4 pm
SAT	10 AUG	MON	2 SEP	Publication of Election Notice (published during this period)
THU	15 AUG	SAT	7 SEP	
			54	
			49	
MON	9 SEP	WED	18 SEP	Election offices open
MON	9 SEP	THU	19 SEP	Certification of voters' roll Nominations open
TUE	17 SEP	TUE	24 SEP	Close of nominations at 12 noon (ballot draw to follow)
TUE	17 SEP	WED	25 SEP	Close of lodgement of candidate statements, photographs, and questionnaires at 12 noon
WED	18 SEP			BALLOT DRAW 10 AM
		FRI	27 SEP	PUBLIC HOLIDAY – ELECTION OFFICE CLOSED
MON	7 OCT			EXTENDED MAIL-OUT PERIOD
		TUE	8 OCT	Mail-out of ballot packs / uncontested ward leaflets
		WED	9 OCT	
THU	10 OCT	THU	10 OCT	
			18	
			17	
			16	
		FRI	25 OCT	1 CLOSE OF VOTING at 6 pm
		SAT	26 OCT	0 Election Day
		MON	28 OCT	Postal vote receipt period Close of postal vote receipt period at 12 noon on Friday 1 November
		FRI	1 NOV	
			2	
			6	
		TUE	5 NOV	PUBLIC HOLIDAY - MELBOURNE CUP
			10	
		FRI	15 NOV	ALL ELECTIONS TO BE DECLARED BY FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER
			20	

AFL Grand Final Public Holiday – Friday 27 September

Refer to **Appendix 4** for further explanation of the proposed dates.

Appendix 2: 2024 Melbourne City Council Leadership Team election timeline

MELBOURNE CITY COUNCIL LEADERSHIP TEAM ELECTION TIMELINE – 2024					
COUNTDOWN					
PROPOSED	WED	12 JUN	136	Council primary enrolment data (Date fixed by Registrar)	
SAT	27 JUL	SAT	10 AUG	77 } Public notice of Close of the Roll Date (published during this period)	
		FRI	16 AUG		71
WED	7 AUG	FRI	30 AUG	57 Close of the Roll at 4 pm	
SAT	10 AUG	MON	2 SEP	54 } Publication of Election Notice (published during this period)	
THU	15 AUG	SAT	7 SEP		49
MON	9 SEP	WED	18 SEP	38 Election office opens	
MON	9 SEP	THU	19 SEP	37 Certification of voters' roll Nominations open	
TUE	17 SEP	TUE	24 SEP	32 Close of nominations at 12 noon	
THU	19 SEP	THU	26 SEP	30 Close of team name registration at 12 noon (ballot draw to follow)	
		FRI	27 SEP	29 PUBLIC HOLIDAY – ELECTION OFFICE CLOSED	
MON	23 SEP	MON	30 SEP	26 Close of lodgement of team statements, preferences, and candidate questionnaires at 12 noon	
MON	7 OCT			19 EXTENDED MAIL-OUT PERIOD	
		TUE	8 OCT	18 } Mail-out of ballot packs / uncontested ward leaflets	
		WED	9 OCT		17
THU	10 OCT	THU	10 OCT		16
		FRI	25 OCT	1 CLOSE OF VOTING at 6 pm	
		SAT	26 OCT	0 Election Day	
		MON	28 OCT	2 } Postal vote receipt period Close of postal vote receipt period at 12 noon on Friday 1 November	
		FRI	1 NOV		6
		TUE	5 NOV	10 PUBLIC HOLIDAY - MELBOURNE CUP	
		FRI	15 NOV	20 ELECTION TO BE DECLARED BY FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER	

AFL Grand Final Public Holiday – Friday 27 September

Refer to **Appendix 4** for further explanation of the proposed dates.

Appendix 3: 2024 Melbourne City Council Election of Councillors timeline

MELBOURNE CITY COUNCIL COUNCILLOR ELECTION TIMELINE – 2024			
COUNTDOWN			
PROPOSED	WED	12 JUN	136 Council primary enrolment data (Date fixed by Registrar)
SAT	27 JUL	SAT 10 AUG	77 } Public notice of Close of the Roll Date (published during this period)
		FRI 16 AUG	71 }
WED	7 AUG	FRI 30 AUG	57 Close of the Roll at 4 pm
SAT	10 AUG	MON 2 SEP	54 } Publication of Election Notice (published during this period)
THU	15 AUG	SAT 7 SEP	49 }
MON	9 SEP	WED 18 SEP	38 Election office opens
MON	9 SEP	THU 19 SEP	37 Certification of voters' roll Nominations open
TUE	17 SEP	TUE 24 SEP	32 Close of nominations at 12 noon
THU	19 SEP	THU 26 SEP	30 Close of candidate groups and name registration at 12 noon (ballot draw to follow)
		FRI 27 SEP	29 PUBLIC HOLIDAY – ELECTION OFFICE CLOSED
MON	23 SEP	MON 30 SEP	26 Close of lodgement of statements, group voting tickets, ungrouped indications of preferences, and questionnaires at 12 noon
MON	7 OCT		19 EXTENDED MAIL-OUT PERIOD
		TUE 8 OCT	18 } Mail-out of ballot packs
		WED 9 OCT	17 }
THU	10 OCT	THU 10 OCT	16 }
		FRI 25 OCT	1 CLOSE OF VOTING at 6 pm
		SAT 26 OCT	0 Election Day
		MON 28 OCT	2 } Postal vote receipt period
		FRI 1 NOV	6 } Close of postal vote receipt period at 12 noon on Friday 1 November
		TUE 5 NOV	10 PUBLIC HOLIDAY - MELBOURNE CUP
		FRI 15 NOV	20 ELECTION TO BE DECLARED BY FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER

AFL Grand Final Public Holiday – Friday 27 September

Refer to **Appendix 4** for further explanation of the proposed dates.

Appendix 4: Amendments to the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020

On 30 April 2024, the Government introduced the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Bill 2024* into Parliament.

The Bill includes an amendment to the date for the close of the roll for the upcoming October 2024 council elections.

This will mean that for the 2024 local government general elections, the date for the close of the roll will be extended from 57 days to 80 days before the election. For all elections after the October 2024 election, including by-elections, the date for the close of the roll will be extended from 57 days to 73 days.

The current election timeline is no longer viable due to an increase in the scale and complexity of local government elections, including changes to enrolment entitlements, population growth, higher number of wards, likely increase in the number of candidates, and reduction in mail services offered by Australia Post.

The close of the roll is the first critical date for an election period. By moving this date earlier other key dates including nomination day, the lodgement date for candidate statements and questionnaires, and the period for mailing out of ballot materials can also be brought forward through the *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020*, providing more time to complete these activities, ensuring they are sustainable.

These changes will ensure the following:

- > the timeframe for roll certification is increased to 23 business days (currently 13 days) to ensure CEOs (or their delegates) and the VEC have adequate time to process enrolment applications and complete related roll certification processes
- > the nomination period is extended to 6.5 business days (currently 3.5 business days) to reduce pressure on the VEC and candidates to lodge their nominations within the nomination period
- > preparation of the ballot packs will be increased to 12 business days (currently 8 business days) to reduce risks of any disruptions to the production process
- > mailout of the ballot materials will occur over 4 business days (currently 3 business days) to manage the risk of mail service level reductions and provide additional safeguards against election fraud.

The election period starts at the time that nominations close on nomination day. Under the proposed timeline, the election period will commence at 12 noon on 17 September 2024 (7 days earlier than under the current requirements).

Appendix 5: Councils and VEC – key interactions timeline

Date	Action	Responsible
26 September 2023 – 18 October 2023	Publish 2024 local government elections draft service plan. Provide council information sessions.	VEC
8 December 2023	Provide election service agreements to councils. Provide estimates to councils.	VEC
1 December 2023 – 15 January 2024	Period for council to prepare and send preliminary roll data CEO list to VEC.	Council
15 January 2024	Final deadline for preliminary roll data CEO list to be shared with VEC.	Council
1 February 2024	Recommended deadline for council to ensure enrolment application and resignation processes are operating.	Council
1 February 2024 - 1 April 2024	Period for council to provide further information in response to VEC requests while analyzing the preliminary roll data CEO list.	Council
26 March 2024 – 15 April 2024	Provide council information sessions.	VEC
24 April 2024	Provide quotes to councils.	VEC
1 May 2024	Deadline for VEC to send preliminary roll data feedback to councils.	VEC
1 May 2024 - 31 May 2024	Recommended period for council to send notices inviting ratepayers to enrol or renew enrolment under section 240 (10) and 240 (12).	Council
1 May 2024 – 30 August 2024 Proposed: 1 May 2024 – 7 August 2024	Enrol completed council application and appointment forms as they are received 246(1).	Council
31 May 2024	Councils complete writing to CEO list voters.	Council
7 June 2024	Final service plan completed.	VEC
14 June 2024	Provide trial CEO list to VEC for all councils unless otherwise advised.	Council
15 June 2024 – 30 June 2024	Provide council information session.	VEC
15 July 2024	Deadline for primary roll CEO list to be shared with the VEC.	Council
31 July 2024 Proposed: 8 July 2024	Deadline for councils to send notices under section 240 (10) and 240 (12).	Council

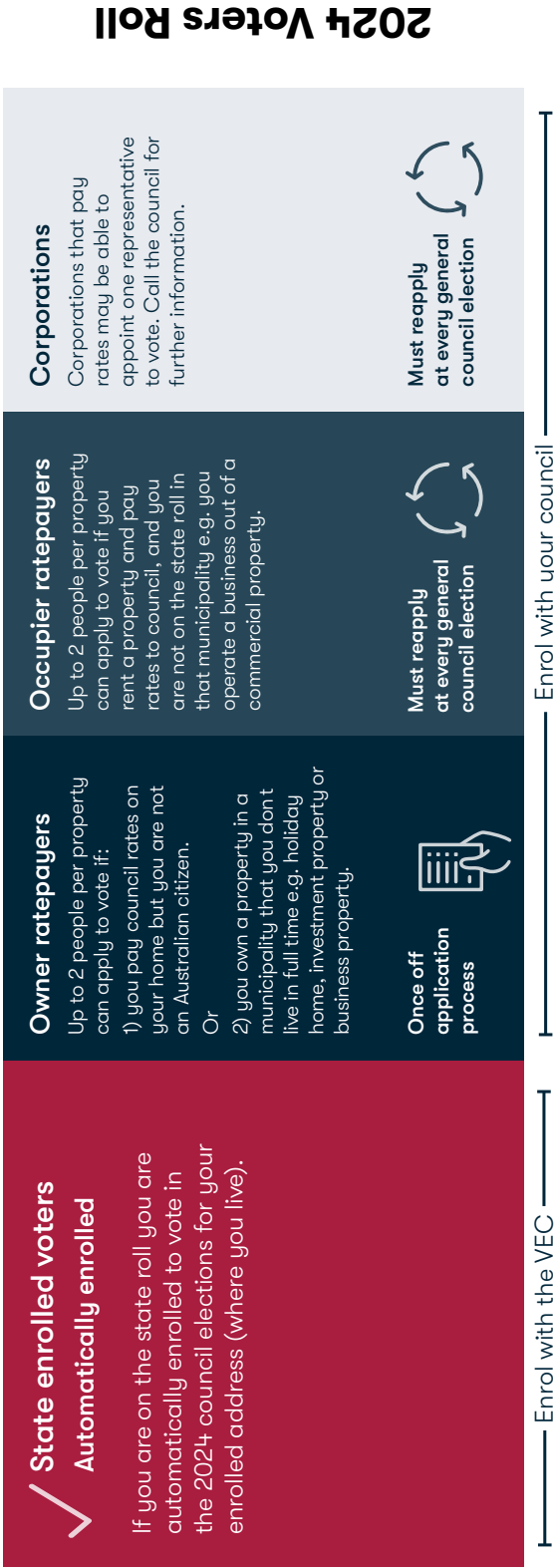
Date	Action	Responsible
15 July 2024 – 16 August 2024 Proposed: 14 July 2024 – 31 July 2024	Period for council to provide further information in response to VEC requests while preparing the primary voters' roll.	Council
23 August 2024	Primary voters roll production.	VEC
30 August 2024 (4pm) Proposed: 7 August 2024	Close of the rolls.	VEC and Council
2 September 2024 (4pm) Proposed: 9 August 2024	Deadline for council to provide certified roll CEO list to the VEC.	Council
3 September 2024 – 18 September 2024 Proposed: 10 August 2024 – 8 September 2024	Period for council (including weekends) to provide further information in response to VEC requests while preparing the certified voters' roll.	Council
3 September 2024 – 25 October 2024	Period for council to provide any new silent voter requests or other information to the VEC.	Council
19 September 2024 (9am) Proposed: 9 September 2024	Certification of the voters' roll.	VEC
19 September – 24 September 2024 Proposed: 9 September 2024 – 17 September 2024	Period for council to respond to VEC on enrolment queries from people nominating as candidates.	Council
19 September 2024 – 1 November 2024 Proposed: 9 September 2024 – 1 November 2024	Period for council to respond to any requests for investigation into accuracy of the voters' roll, or requests for unenrolled votes.	Council
May 2025	Forward invoice 1 (electoral services) to councils.	VEC
July 2025	Forward invoice 2 (compulsory voting – part a) to councils.	VEC
December 2025	Forward invoice 3 (compulsory voting – penalty and FCF).	VEC

Appendix 6: Diagram – ‘Who can vote in the 2024 local government elections?’

Who can vote in the 2024 Victorian local council elections?



You can only vote **once** in each municipality, no matter how many properties you own or occupy.



Voting is compulsory for everyone who is enrolled.

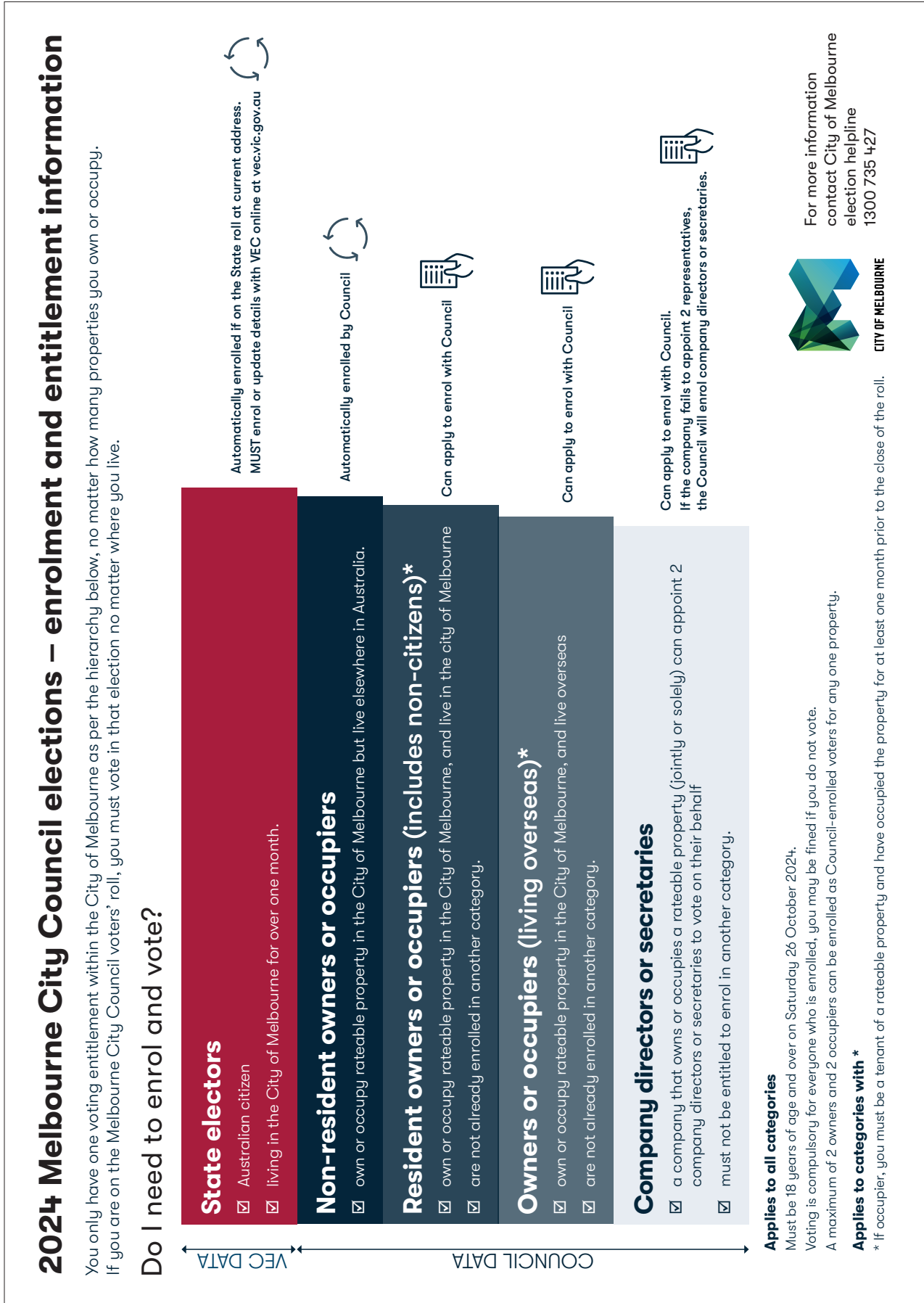
*¹Whittlesea City Council and Casey City Council did not have a general election in 2020, and have different rules for the 2024 election. Some property owners will be automatically enrolled. For further information [check our website](#).

*²Moira Shire Council's next general election will be in October 2028.

*³Melbourne City Council has different rules for enrolling and voting. For further information [check our website](#).

vec.vic.gov.au

Appendix 7: Diagram – ‘2024 Melbourne City Council elections – enrolment and entitlement information’



Appendix 8: Councils requiring an electoral structure or ward boundary review

Review type	Affected Councils
Electoral structure review	<p>Rural councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Buloke Shire Council > Campaspe Shire Council > Central Goldfields Shire Council > Corangamite Shire Council > Gannawarra Shire Council > Hepburn Shire Council > Moorabool Shire Council > Mount Alexander Shire Council > Northern Grampians Shire Council > Strathbogie Shire Council > Surf Coast Shire Council > Yarriambiack Shire Council
Electoral structure review	<p>Regional city and metropolitan councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ballarat City Council > Brimbank City Council > Frankston City Council > Glen Eira City Council > Greater Bendigo City Council > Greater Geelong City Council > Greater Shepparton City Council > Hobsons Bay City Council > Horsham Rural City Council > Latrobe City Council > Maribyrnong City Council > Melton City Council > Merri-bek City Council > Mildura Rural City Council

Review type	Affected Councils
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Monash City Council › Moonee Valley City Council › Port Phillip City Council › Stonnington City Council › Wangaratta Rural City Council › Warrnambool City Council › Wodonga City Council › Yarra City Council
Electoral structure review	<p>Interface councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Casey City Council › Hume City Council › Mornington Peninsula Shire Council › Whittlesea City Council › Wyndham City Council
Ward boundary review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Bass Coast Shire Council › Baw Baw Shire Council › Boroondara City Council › Cardinia Shire Council › Greater Dandenong City Council › Loddon Shire Council › Murrindindi Shire Council › Pyrenees Shire Council › South Gippsland Shire Council › Wellington Shire Council

Appendix 9: Election preparation key milestones

Milestone	Start date	End date
Council information sessions	26 September 2023; 26 March 2024; 15 June 2024	18 October 2023; 15 April 2024; 30 June 2024
Election service agreements provided to councils	8 December 2023	8 December 2023
Council Liaison Officers appointed	1 March 2024	30 April 2024
Election Managers/assistant EMs identified and appointed	8 January 2024	12 July 2024
Final Service Plan completed	-	7 June 2024
Public enquiry service operational	15 July 2024	1 November 2024
Office lease period (6 months)	1 August 2024	31 January 2025
Resource delivery and election office set-up	14 August 2024	12 September 2024
Election Managers in offices	2 September 2024	26 November 2024

Appendix 10: VEC recommendations from the 2020 report to Parliament

Recommendation	Progress update
<p>1 That the Government introduces legislation that ensures enrolment entitlements and compulsory voting obligations for the next Casey City Council and Whittlesea City Council general elections in October 2024 are aligned with all other local councils going to election at the same time.</p>	<p>This was actioned by the <i>Local Government Legislation Amendment (Rating and Other Matters) Act 2022</i>.</p> <p>The requirements for the Casey City Council and Whittlesea City Council general elections in October 2024 will match those going to their second election under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>.</p>
<p>2 The Government notes the total possible number of scrutineers able to be appointed for an election under the ordinary operation of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (the LG Regulations) may be unsustainable if social distancing protocols extend beyond current regulatory relief arrangements.</p>	<p>The temporary regulatory relief inserted into the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 was extended and has since been replaced with an ongoing provision permitting for the maximum number of scrutineers for each candidate to be varied to ensure compliance with pandemic orders — see Regulation 64A of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020.</p>
<p>3 That the local government sector notes the VEC’s growing difficulty with sourcing suitable local counting venues.</p>	<p>This remains an ongoing challenge for the VEC and increasing centralisation of some processes will be required for the 2024 local government elections.</p>
<p>4 That the Government notes the increasing role of political parties in local government elections and the community’s desire for transparency in respect to candidate-party affiliations.</p>	<p>No action has been taken in respect to this recommendation.</p>
<p>5 That the Government notes voters have reported that the candidate questionnaire is not fit-for-purpose.</p>	<p>No action has been taken in respect to this recommendation.</p>
<p>6 That the Government notes that reach and readership of local newspaper continues to decline, and that news and information consumption is largely digital.</p>	<p>The VEC is permitted to publish statutory notices concerning local government elections via its website and will continue to consider print advertising, including local newspaper advertising, where suitable outlets are available.</p>
<p>7 That the Government amends the deadline for candidates to lodge their candidate statements, photographs, and candidate questionnaires to align with the close of nominations.</p>	<p>This recommendation is being considered as part of the planned changes to the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 in time for the 2024 local government elections.</p>
<p>8 That the Government amends legislation to require councils to directly contact eligible council-enrolled voters and notify them in relation to their enrolment eligibility, application deadlines and obligation to vote (once enrolled).</p>	<p>For future general elections, the law requires councils to contact only those council-enrolled voters whose applications expire. The VEC maintains it is best practice for councils to contact all eligible council-enrolled voters about their opportunity to apply to enrol or update their details prior to each general election.</p>
<p>9 That the Government amends the prescribed list of excuses for failing to vote in the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 to include voters who were unable to vote at an election because they were experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>This recommendation is being considered as part of the planned changes to the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 in time for the 2024 local government elections.</p>

Appendix 11: Education and inclusion services

Democracy Ambassador Program

The Democracy Ambassador Program will focus on reaching voters in traditionally under-represented communities. The program will include the training and support of a team of peer leaders to delivery electoral education and enrolment outreach areas across Victoria identified as having typically lower levels of electoral participation and higher informality will be prioritised for outreach promotion and delivery.

Youth enrolment and voting

A focus of the 2024 communication and engagement campaign will be the engagement of young people to enrol and vote.

Services for those without a home

We will offer face-to-face outreach enrolment sessions prior to the close of roll to homelessness and accommodation support services.

Prisoner engagement

In partnership with Corrections Victoria, information and support will be offered to prisons via the VEC's Electoral Engagement for People in Prisons project.

Engaging Aboriginal communities

In partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders and organisations, we will support the engagement of Aboriginal communities across Victoria and include the opportunity to provide information, education, and enrolment sessions to groups in Aboriginal community locations.

Inclusion of people with disabilities

Our services for people living with disability will include but are not limited to braille and large print ballot papers and peer-to-peer electoral education sessions. This will aim to further enhance the support provided to people with disabilities to enrol and vote.

We will liaise with Vision Australia (Vic) to produce material to be sent to all Victorian voters on their database. The communication will make these voters aware that elections are occurring, and provide basic information about the elections, contact details for further information, and a phone number for those who wish to register for braille or large print ballot material.

Appendix 12: 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
Arabic	9209 0100
Assyrian	9209 0160
Burmese	9209 0161
Cantonese	9209 0101
Croatian	9209 0102
Dari	9209 0193
Dinka	9209 0119
Farsi/Persian	9209 0195
Greek	9209 0103
Hazaragi	9209 0162
Italian	9209 0104
Khmer	9209 0192
Korean	9209 0194
Macedonian	9209 0105
Mandarin	9209 0106
Nepali	9209 0163
Thai	9209 0164
Turkish	9209 0110
Urdu	9209 0165
Vietnamese	9209 0111
All other non-English languages	9209 0112

Appendix 13: List of data categories reported for 2024 local government elections

Topics	Data categories	Report to Parliament	Report to Council
Legislative and performance indicators	Legislative changes and obligations	Yes	Yes
	Performance goals and outcomes	Yes	No
Enrolment	State enrolled voter lists	Yes	Yes
	Council enrolled voter lists	Yes	Yes
	Amalgamated voters roll	Yes	Yes
Election preparation	Public enquiry call centre and interpreter services	Yes	Yes
	Surge staffing	Yes	No
Candidates and vacancy	Nominations	Yes	Yes
	Candidates and vacancies	Yes	Yes
	Candidate statements	No	Yes
	Uncontested or failed elections	Yes	Yes
Ballot material	Ballot production and mail out	Yes	Yes
	Mail out of other election material	Yes	Yes
	Ballots returned	Yes	Yes
Election communication	Outreach program delivery	Yes	Yes
	Media engagement and advertising	Yes	Yes
	Website and VoterAlert statistics	Yes	Yes
Counting	Manual counts	Yes	Yes*
	Computer counts	Yes	Yes*
	Recount details	Yes	Yes*
Results	Number of elected candidates	Yes	Yes
	Number of failed candidates	Yes	Yes
	Nominations refunds	Yes	Yes
Analysis	Turnout and informality	Yes	Yes
	Comparative statistics across wards and councils	Yes	No
	Analysis of participation with other data	Yes	No

Topics	Data categories	Report to Parliament	Report to Council
Evaluation	Satisfaction of candidates, councils, and voters with election services	Yes	No
	Analysis of vote-counting processes	Yes	No

*Where appropriate

Data provided to individual council reports is tailored to the specific council. This means some areas are more specific than what might be found in the Report to Parliament, where in others the reported data is at a whole-state level.

