

GLOSSARY OF ELECTORAL TERMS



Following is a glossary of electoral terms that will be a useful reference guide for study purposes and to help students understand the terms used throughout this publication.

Absent Vote

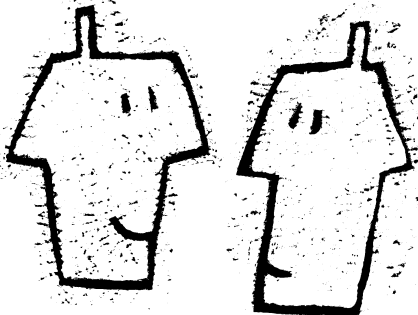
A vote made at a voting centre by an elector who is outside his/her district on election day.

Absolute Majority

More than 50% of the formal vote.

Ballot Paper

The paper on which a vote is marked. The ballot paper shows the candidates' names and party affiliation, if any. It also contains voting instructions.



Bicameral

Describes a parliament with two Houses (or Chambers) as is the case in Victoria.

Blue Ribbon Electorates

An electorate where a substantial majority of voters usually vote for the same member or party.

By-election

A by-election is an election in a single electorate to fill a casual vacancy caused by the departure of a sitting Member of Parliament before that Member's term expires.

Candidate

A candidate is an eligible elector who nominates for election to the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council.

Canvassing

Soliciting of votes at an election for a candidate or political party.

Coalition

A combination of two or more parties in Parliament, usually to form a Government or Opposition.

Compulsory Voting

All enrolled electors must vote at State elections. The fine for failing to vote without a valid reason is about \$50.

Court of Disputed Returns

The Supreme Court sits as the Court of Disputed Returns when it hears a petition disputing an election result. It has jurisdiction to try cases in which the validity of an election is in dispute. This jurisdiction may be exercised by a single judge.

Declaration of Result

The announcement by the Election Manager of the result of the election and the name of the candidate elected.

Donkey Vote

The term used to describe a ballot paper marked with preferences for candidates without consideration of their policies or abilities. A classic donkey vote is one which records preferences straight down the ballot paper in the same order as the names printed.



Election Manager

A person appointed by the Victorian Electoral Commission to conduct an election for an Electoral District or Region.

Elector

A person who is enrolled to vote.

Electoral Commissioner

The statutory officer appointed by the Governor-in-Council with responsibility for the proper conduct of Parliamentary elections.

Electoral District

One of the 88 Legislative Assembly electorates.

Electoral Region

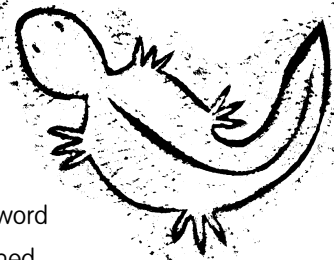
One of the 8 Legislative Council electorates. (Each Region contains 11 electoral Districts)

Formal Vote

A formal vote is a vote which is completed in accordance with the instructions on the ballot paper.

Gerrymander

The drawing of electoral boundaries which result in a bias toward a candidate or a party. The term originated in Massachusetts, USA in 1812 when Elbridge Gerry was Governor. One of the electoral boundaries was drawn so as to look like a salamander, so the word gerrymander was coined.



How-to-vote card

Any card, handbill, pamphlet or notice which is handed out at an election showing how a party or candidate would prefer the elector to vote.

Independent

A candidate or elected Member of Parliament who has no political party affiliations.

Informal Vote

A ballot paper which is either left blank or is incorrectly marked. These ballot papers are excluded from the count and therefore do not contribute to the election of a candidate.

Legislative Assembly

The Lower House of the Parliament in Victoria. The party or coalition of parties that wins majority support in this House forms the Government.

Legislative Council

The Upper House of the Parliament in Victoria. It is often referred to as the 'house of review'.



Malapportionment

Electorates of unequal voter numbers.

Marginal Seat

A seat held by a Member of Parliament with a small majority of votes.

Mobile voting

Mobile voting facilities are provided to assist electors in places such as hospitals or nursing homes to cast a vote. The voting is mobile because election officials move around the wards, taking portable ballot boxes and voting compartments directly to patients.

Nomination

The process by which a person becomes a candidate at an election.

Opinion Polls

A survey of opinion of voters.

Political Party

An organisation which promotes the election to the Parliament of a candidate or candidates endorsed by it.

Voting centre

A location at which voting takes place on election day. Formerly called a polling place, it is now called 'voting centre' under Victorian electoral law.

Preferential voting

A vote for all candidates in order of preference. If no candidate has an absolute majority of first preference votes, preferences are then distributed until one candidate has an absolute majority. This system of voting is used for the Legislative Assembly.

Premier

The leader of a State Government.

President

The chief presiding officer of the Legislative Council.

Proportional Representation

A system designed to ensure that candidates are elected in proportion to the votes they receive. This system is used for the Legislative Council in Victoria.

Provisional Enrolment

A 17 year old Australian citizen may apply for provisional enrolment to enable him or her to vote if they attain the age of 18 in the period between the close of rolls and election day.

Re-check

A re-check is a normal procedure undertaken by an Election Manager before a preference count is conducted. All voting centres figures and ballot-papers are re-examined. Scrutineers are entitled to be present and should be aware of any corrected figures before a preference count is commenced. (This term should not be confused with the term 'recount').

Recount

A re-examination and count of all formal and informal ballot-papers by an Election Manager before the declaration of the poll.

Registered Political Party

A political party that has more than 500 members who are Victorian electors, and which has been registered by the Victorian Electoral Commission.

Scrutineer

A person appointed by a candidate to observe voting and the scrutiny and count of ballot papers to satisfy their candidate that the election was conducted strictly in accordance with the law.

Scrutiny

The checking and counting of ballot papers to ascertain the result of an election.

Seat

A seat in a Parliament held by an elected Member. Can also refer to a Member's electorate.

Secret ballot

A vote in secret. In 1856 Victoria became the first State in the world to adopt the secret ballot. It is also referred to as the 'Australian ballot'.

Speaker

The chief presiding officer of the Legislative Assembly is called the Speaker.

Swinging Voter

A voter who does not always vote for the same political party.

Swings

The measure, in percentage terms, of electoral support transferred from one political party to another.

Tally Room

Location where election results are displayed on election night.

Term

The length of time a Parliament may sit before an election is held. In Victoria, Parliament has a fixed term of four years.

Unenrolled Elector

A person who is not on the roll for the electorate in which he/she claims a vote and who declares that he/she has been mistakenly omitted from the roll.

Universal Suffrage

The right for all enrolled adults, over the age of 18, to vote at elections.

**Voting Centre**

A location at which an elector may vote on or before election day.

Westminster System

The form and processes of the British system of Parliamentary government. Its major characteristics are: a bicameral legislature in which the Lower House has final authority; government by a cabinet which is drawn from the Parliament and is responsible to it; an 'above-politics' constitutional monarch as the ceremonial head of state, distinct from the effective head of government; the rule of law and judicial independence; and a career public service impartially serving the government of the day.

Writ

A Writ is an order issued by the Governor of Victoria to the Victorian Electoral Commission that an election be held. The Writ specifies key election dates.

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