

Virtual Voting Experience – Teachers’ Notes

The process of voting is taken for granted by many. A State election involves many people and resources to ensure that all Victorians have access to a voting centre or are made aware of their other options if they can’t vote on the day.

This section of the website provides a window to what happens on election day from a voter’s perspective. Students are given the opportunity to follow the process, answer questions and fill out the ballot papers similar to those they would see on election day.

This is a good opportunity to have students investigate voting options, particularly for those who are unable to make it to their local voting centre. It is important to emphasise that the VEC make voting as accessible as possible to all Victorians. Activity one therefore, is the foundation work to lead to activity two, which asks students to consider and compare situations in other countries where voting is either illegal or not accessible for citizens.

Activity One – Where and how do I vote? (Class Sheet available)

For each case study, what are the options for each person? You can provide students with the worksheets or write up the various case studies on the board. Direct students to the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au to investigate the various options for each of the case studies. Please remind students that there is normally more than one option for each scenario.

Case Study One

On the weekend of the State election, Nick will be in Sydney for his cousin’s wedding. He will also be there for the two weeks before the wedding helping his cousin with the preparations. What are Nick’s options?

Case Study Two

Elisha has turned 18 and is looking forward to voting in her first election, however, she will begin her backpacking trip across Europe and will be in London during the election. What are Elisha’s options?

Case Study Three

Mohammad is working from 8:00am – 6:00pm on election day which are the opening hours of voting centres. What are Mohammad’s options?

Case Study Four

Anastasia lives in the Caulfield District, however, she will be staying with a friend that weekend in Mornington. What are Anastasia’s options?

Case Study Five

Daniel and Rachel will be on the Great Victorian Bike Ride over the weekend of the election. Where will Daniel and Rachel be on election day and what are their options?

Case Study Six

John lives in Suggan Buggan and his closest accessible voting centre is 60 kilometres from his home. What are John's options?

Case Study Seven

Eileen is legally blind and would like to do a secret ballot vote. What are Eileen's options?

Case Study Eight

Maria and Bruno are taking their young children on a holiday to sunny Queensland and they will be away over the election weekend. What are their options?

Answers

There are many options for the case studies above including completing an early vote, or visiting an interstate electoral commission. Some embassies overseas also provide facilities to vote. You can also vote outside your district but will need to complete an absent vote. If you live more than 20 kilometres from a voting centre you can apply for a postal vote. For the first time, the 2006 elections will allow legally blind Victorians to complete a secret vote electronically at designated E Centres. These are just a few options and there is more than one option for most of the case studies above.

Discussion and Conclusion

The point of this exercise is to illustrate how the VEC make voting accessible for Victorians. This leads well into the extension activity that asks students to compare the Victorian electoral system and accessibility to those internationally.

In some countries, people don't have the right to vote or access to voting is made difficult. Some people have to walk miles or risk trekking through war-ridden terrain. In some cases, people are not allowed to vote and they don't get to have their say on who should run their state or country.

Activity 2 – Comparative Exercise

Now that students have familiarised themselves with the Victorian voting experience and understand that the VEC makes voting as accessible as possible for all Victorians, they are now equipped to compare this system to other electoral situations in other countries. There are many website students can research. Here are a few:

www.osce.org

<http://www.ifes.org/>

<http://www.idea.int/index.cfm>

<http://recursoselectorales.org/>

<http://www.gksoft.com/govt/en/elections.html>

You could try to get a speaker in through Amnesty International, or a local community group with members who have lived in countries where voting isn't accessible or permitted.