

Structural Overview & Key Dates

Local Government
Election Information Series

Introduction

The Victorian Electoral Commission has responded to tenders and provided election services to local councils in Victoria since 1994. Since then, the VEC has conducted over 230 general elections for local councils.

Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act) and Part 3 of the City of Melbourne Act 2001 are the principal pieces of legislation for the conduct of local council elections in Victoria. The Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2005 make detailed provisions for the conduct of local council elections.

The introduction of the Local Government (Democratic) Reform Act 2003 aligned the timing of all local council elections to coincide for the first time in November 2008 and every four years hence. Election dates were moved from March to the last Saturday in November, the same timing as for fixed-term State elections, but two years apart.

Councils with expected election costs exceeding \$100,000 must formally tender for the provision of election services (this included 67 councils in 2008). The VEC has responded to tenders or requests for quotation from all Victorian councils and has been appointed as service provider for all 79 councils for the 2008 elections. This will include a total of 631 vacancies to be filled during the election period. Please see the postal/attendance election timelines at the end of this document.

Council Election Types

The choice of whether to conduct the election by postal voting or attendance is a decision for council. A list of Victoria's councils and the election type they have chosen for this year's election is included at the end of this document.

Postal Elections

Postal elections are conducted entirely by post and were first used in Victoria in 1996. Postal elections tend to have higher participation rates and lower rates of informal voting than attendance elections.

The voter turnout rate in the 2005 elections conducted by postal ballot was 75.6%, with an informal rate of 3.6%.

The steps involved in postal voting are as follows:

- Each voter is sent a ballot pack containing voting instructions, candidate statements, ballot paper, and envelopes for returning the completed ballot paper.
- After voting, the voter inserts the ballot paper into the ballot paper envelope, which has an opaque lining and a tear-off slip containing the voter's details. The envelope is then inserted into another envelope, pre-addressed to the Returning Officer, and mailed.
- Upon receipt, the Returning Officer scans the ballot paper envelope to record that the person has voted, and then places the envelope in a security box. When voting closes, the tear-off slip is removed and placed in a sealed box separate from the vote counting area. This means that no one can identify a ballot paper envelope with a voter.
- The ballot paper envelopes are opened and the votes are counted by election officials.

Attendance Elections

At attendance elections most voters cast their vote at voting centres on election day, although people may cast an early vote, either in person or by applying for a postal vote.

The voter participation rate in the 2005 elections conducted by attendance voting was 72.8%, with an informal rate of 9.3%.

The steps involved in attendance voting are as follows:

- Election officials mark each voter off the electoral roll before issuing the voter with a ballot paper. The voter is directed to a voting screen, where they complete their ballot paper in private.
- After voting, the voter folds the ballot paper to conceal the vote, and places the ballot paper in the secure ballot box.

Who Can Vote?

Voting is compulsory for residents who are enrolled on the State roll within the council area holding the election.

Non-resident voters and people aged 70 or over are encouraged to vote but will not be fined if they fail to vote. Other council residents who fail to vote may be fined. The fine for failing to vote is around \$57.

For council elections, the voters roll is made up of voters from the State electoral roll, as well as voters who have council entitlement to vote. (Entitlements for the City of Melbourne vary – please call 1300 735 427 for further information.)

Those automatically entitled to vote include:

- People who live in the municipality and are on the State electoral roll for their present address; and
- People who own property in a municipality but don't live at that property, and are the first or second-named person on that council's rates records (this includes non-Australian citizens).
- Those who can apply to vote include:
 - Non-Australian citizens who live and pay rates in a municipality in which an election is being held; and
 - People who pay rates on a property they occupy and have no other voting entitlement in the municipality, e.g. they are a shop tenant, and are either named on the council's rates records to receive the rates notice, or have the written consent of the owner to vote in their place; and
 - Directors or company secretaries of corporations that pay rates in a municipality in which an election is being held, and have no other voting entitlement within that municipality.

Changes to Legislation for the 2008 Council Elections

This year's Local Government Amendment (Elections) Act 2008 made minor changes to the conduct of this year's council elections.

Key changes include:

- Candidate nominations now close at 12 noon (instead of 4.00pm) 32 days before election day for both postal and attendance elections. Previously, nominations for attendance elections have closed a day later than for postal elections.
- A candidate is now required to sign their nomination form in the presence of the Returning Officer. If a candidate cannot do this, they must provide a statutory declaration declaring that they are nominating, reasons they cannot sign the nomination form in person, and that they have personally signed the declaration.
- New provisions for the Returning Officer to conduct an electronic ballot draw.
- More flexibility in setting dates for by-elections.

For further information on the 2008 local council elections, please call 131 832 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

2008 Council voting methods and structures

Council	Election method	No. Cr	Council structure	Council	Election method	No. Cr	Council structure
Alpine Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided	Golden Plains Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided
Ararat Rural City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided	Greater Bendigo City Council	Postal	9	9 Single-Cr wards
Ballarat City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards	Greater Dandenong City Council	Attendance	11	3 three-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward
Banyule City Council	Attendance	7	7 Single-Cr wards	Greater Geelong City Council	Postal	12	12 Single-Cr wards
Bass Coast Shire Council	Postal	7	7 Single-Cr wards	Greater Shepparton City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided
Baw Baw Shire Council	Postal	9	1 three-Cr ward, 3 two-Cr wards	Hepburn Shire Council	Postal	7	2 two-Cr wards, 3 single-Cr wards
Bayside City Council	Postal	7	1 three-Cr ward, 2 two-Cr wards	Hindmarsh Shire Council	Postal	6	3 two-Cr wards
Benalla Rural City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided	Hobsons Bay City Council	Attendance	7	7 Single-Cr wards
Boroondara City Council	Postal	10	Single-Cr wards	Horsham Rural City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided
Borough of Queenscliffe Council	Postal	5	Unsubdivided	Hume City Council	Postal	9	3 two-Cr wards, 1 three Cr ward
Brimbank City Council	Attendance	11	1 two-Cr ward, 3 three-Cr wards	Indigo Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided
Buloke Shire Council	Postal	7	1 three-Cr ward, 2 two-Cr wards	Kingston City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards
Campaspe Shire Council	Postal	9	2 three-Cr wards, 3 single-Cr wards	Knox City Council	Attendance	9	9 Single-Cr wards
Cardinia Shire Council	Postal	7	2 single-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward, 1 three-Cr ward	Latrobe City Council	Postal	9	9 Single-Cr wards
Casey City Council	Postal	11	1 single-Cr ward, 5 two-Cr wards	Loddon Shire Council	Postal	5	3 single-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Postal	7	3 single-Cr wards, 1 four-Cr ward	Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards
City of Port Phillip Council	Attendance	7	7 Single-Cr wards	Mansfield Shire Council	Postal	5	3 single-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward
Colac Otway Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided	Manningham City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards
Corangamite Shire Council	Postal	7	4 single-Cr wards, 1 three-Cr ward	Maribyrnong City Council	Postal	7	7 Single-Cr wards
Darebin City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards	Maroondah City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards
East Gippsland Shire Council	Postal	9	Unsubdivided	Melton Shire Council	Postal	7	1 three-Cr ward, 2 two-Cr wards
Frankston City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards	Mildura Rural City Council	Postal	9	Unsubdivided
Gannawarra Shire Council	Postal	7	2 single-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward, 1 three-Cr ward	Mitchell Shire Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards
Glen Eira City Council	Attendance	9	3 three-Cr wards	Moira Shire Council	Postal	9	Unsubdivided
Glenelg Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided	Monash City Council	Postal	11	1 two-Cr ward, 3 three-Cr wards

2008 Council voting methods and structures

Council	Election method	No. Cr	Council structure	Council	Election method	No. Cr	Council structure
Moonee Valley City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards	Wyndham City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards
Moorabool Shire Council	Postal	7	3 single-Cr wards, 1 four-Cr ward	Yarra City Council	Attendance	9	3 three-Cr wards
Moreland City Council	Attendance	11	1 three-Cr ward, 2 four-Cr wards	Yarra Ranges Shire Council	Postal	9	9 Single-Cr wards
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	Postal	11	11 Single-Cr wards	Yarriambiack Shire Council	Postal	7	2 two-Cr wards, 1 three-Cr ward
Mount Alexander Shire Council	Postal	7	4 single-Cr wards, 1 three-Cr ward				
Moyne Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided				
Murrindindi Shire Council	Postal	7	7 Single-Cr wards				
Nillumbik Shire Council	Postal	7	7 Single-Cr wards				
Northern Grampians Shire Council	Postal	7	2 single-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward, 1 three-Cr ward				
Pyrenees Shire Council	Postal	5	5 Single-Cr wards				
South Gippsland Shire Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards				
Southern Grampians Shire Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided				
Stonnington City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards				
Strathbogie Shire Council	Postal	7	5 single-Cr wards, 1 two-Cr ward				
Surf Coast Shire Council	Postal	9	Unsubdivided				
Swan Hill Rural City Council	Postal	7	3 single-Cr wards, 1 four-Cr ward				
Towong Shire Council	Postal	5	Unsubdivided				
Wangaratta Rural City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided				
Warrnambool City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided				
Wellington Shire Council	Postal	9	Unsubdivided				
West Wimmera Shire Council	Postal	5	Unsubdivided				
Whitehorse City Council	Postal	10	5 two-Cr wards				
Whittlesea City Council	Postal	9	3 three-Cr wards				
Wodonga City Council	Postal	7	Unsubdivided				

Postal election timeline

Exhibition Roll Date	AUG 21	THU	(100 days before Election Day)
Public Notice of Entitlement Date	SEP 10	WED	
	SEP 16	TUE	
Exhibition Period	SEP 29	MON	
Entitlement Date	OCT 3	FRI	(57 days before Election Day)
Publication of Election Notice	OCT 6	MON	
	OCT 11	SAT	
Opening of Election Office	OCT 22	WED	
Certification of Voters Roll Opening of Nominations	OCT 23	THU	
Nomination Day	OCT 28	TUE	Closes 12 noon
Lodgement of Candidates' Statements	OCT 29	WED	Candidate Statements Close 4.00 pm
Indications of Preferences	OCT 31	FRI	Preferences Close 4.00 pm
Mail-out of Ballot Packs/Uncontested Ward Leaflets	NOV 11	TUE	
	NOV 13	THU	
Close of Voting	NOV 28	FRI	Voting Closes 6.00 pm
ELECTION DAY	NOV 29	SAT	
	NOV 30	SUN	Counting

Attendance election timeline

Exhibition Roll Date	AUG 21	THU	(100 days before Election Day)
Public Notice of Entitlement Date	SEP 10	WED	
	SEP 16	TUE	
Exhibition Period	SEP 29	MON	
Entitlement Date	OCT 3	FRI	(57 days before Election Day)
Publication of Election Notice	OCT 6	MON	
	OCT 11	SAT	
Opening of Election Office	OCT 22	WED	
Certification of Voters Roll Opening of Nominations	OCT 23	THU	
Nomination Day	OCT 28	TUE	Closes 12 noon
Commence Postal and Early Voting First day for Registration of How-to-Vote cards	OCT 29	WED	
Mailout EasyVote Card	NOV 14	FRI	
Last day for Registration of How-to-Vote cards	NOV 21	FRI	Closes 12 Noon
Close of Postal Voting Application	NOV 27	THU	Closes 12 Noon
Close of Early Voting	NOV 28	FRI	
ELECTION DAY	NOV 29	SAT	Voting Closes 6.00 pm
	NOV 30	SUN	Counting

City of Melbourne election timeline - *Leadership Team*

Exhibition Roll Date	AUG 21	THU	(100 days before Election Day)
Public Notice of Entitlement Date	SEP 8	MON	
	SEP 11	THU	
Exhibition Period	SEP 29	MON	
Entitlement Date	OCT 3	FRI	(57 days before Election Day)
Publication of Election Notice	OCT 6	MON	Telephone Enquiry Service Commences
	OCT 9	THU	
Opening of Election Office	OCT 22	WED	
Certification of Voters Roll Opening of Nominations	OCT 23	THU	
Nomination Day	OCT 28	TUE	Closes 12 noon Ballot Draw – time to be advised
Team Name Registration	OCT 30	THU	Closes 4.00 pm
Team Statements and Preferences	NOV 3	MON	
Mail-out of Ballot Packs	NOV 11	TUE	
	NOV 13	THU	
Close of Voting	NOV 28	FRI	Voting Closes 6.00 pm
ELECTION DAY	NOV 29	SAT	Extraction of ballot papers
	NOV 30	SUN	Counting Commences

City of Melbourne election timeline - 7 Councillors

Exhibition Roll Date	AUG 21	THU	(100 days before Election Day)
Public Notice of Entitlement Date	SEP 8	MON	
	SEP 11	THU	
Exhibition Period	SEP 29	MON	
Entitlement Date	OCT 3	FRI	(57 days before Election Day)
Publication of Election Notice	OCT 6	MON	Telephone Enquiry Service Commences
	OCT 9	THU	
Opening of Election Office	OCT 22	WED	
Certification of Voters Roll Opening of Nominations	OCT 23	THU	
Nomination Day	OCT 28	TUE	Closes 12 noon
Group Name Registration Ballot Draw – time to be advised	OCT 30	THU	Closes 4.00 pm
Group/Ungrouped Statements and Group Voting Tickets/Indication of Preferences	NOV 3	MON	Closes 4.00 pm
Mail-out of Ballot Packs	NOV 11	TUE	
	NOV 13	THU	
Close of Voting	NOV 28	FRI	Voting Closes 6.00 pm
ELECTION DAY	NOV 29	SAT	Extraction of ballot papers
	NOV 30	SUN	Counting Commences

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