Young people education and engagement plan

Victorian Electoral Commission

2025–27

McLaren, Bonni.
“Where did you go?”

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.

Electoral Commissioner's introduction

I am proud to present the *Young people education and engagement plan 2025–27*. The second plan continues our work at the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to help young people engage in their democracy.

Young Victorians are interested in how politics affects their daily lives and the future of our state. At the same time, enrolment and voting rates are decreasing for this group. The plan outlines how we will identify and remove barriers to participation and help a new generation of active citizens understand both how and why we vote.

Each of our education and engagement plans is the result of years of working closely with Victorian communities. We developed the plan with youth sector stakeholders and our Young People Advisory Group. We are grateful to these groups and will continue to work with them to achieve the plan's goals.

I look forward to seeing the plan in action. I sincerely hope that our work to improve inclusion practices will help Victoria's democracy grow and thrive.

Sven Bluemmel
Electoral Commissioner

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About us

The VEC is an independent authority set up under Victoria's *Electoral Act 2002*. Our vision is that all Victorians actively participate in their democracy, and our purpose is to provide high-quality, accessible electoral services with innovation, honesty and independence.

> Our vision is that all Victorians actively participate in their democracy.

Our responsibilities include:

- running state, local council, and statutory elections
- maintaining the register of Victorian electors
- conducting electoral boundary reviews
- administering political funding and donation disclosure laws
- conducting research in the public interest
- promoting public awareness and understanding of electoral issues
- regulating obligations under the Electoral Act 2002.

Our values are:

- independence – acting with impartiality and integrity
- accountability – transparent reporting and effective stewardship of resources
- innovation – shaping our future through creativity and leadership
- respect – consideration of self, others and the environment
- collaboration – working as a team with partners and communities.

Our advisory groups

We have 5 active community advisory groups. These are the:

- Young People Advisory Group (YPAG)
- Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Advisory Group
- Prisons and Without a Home (PAWAH) Advisory Group
- Electoral Access Advisory Group (EAAG).

Young People Advisory Group

The YPAG includes young people and the following youth sector service providers:

- Parliament of Victoria
- Foundation for Young Australians
- Youth Affairs Council Victoria
- YMCA Victoria.

The YP Advisory Group provides feedback and ideas to improve our electoral engagement with young people.

Figure 1: The VEC sponsors the YMCA Youth Parliament, a key event to help young people engage with and debate the key issues that influence them.

Developing the YPEEP

Our work on the YPEEP is shaped by the 2 governing documents outlined below.

Strategy 2027

Strategy 2027 sets VEC objectives until 2027. It reflects the more dynamic and complex environment we now work in, and responds to new challenges including:

- changes to the law
- changes to the way people expect elections to run, including using technology
- misinformation and disinformation across the media landscape and its impact on political views
- decreasing trust in democratic systems
- increasing threats to our systems and applications and a need for better cybersecurity.

The strategy has 4 thematic areas that guide our work and help address these challenges:

- Trust – we are trusted to deliver electoral services with integrity and high quality.
- Voters – we deliver a great voter experience.
- Processes and systems – our processes and systems respond to a complex environment.
- Wellbeing – our people are capable, engaged and satisfied.

These themes inform the goals and actions of our education and engagement plans.

The VEC Strategy 2027 has 4 thematic areas:

- trust
- voters
- processes and systems
- wellbeing.

Inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) framework

We are committed to providing inclusive and accessible services to Victorians and creating a workplace that reflects the diverse communities we serve. We aim to foster respect and prevent all forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence.

We are developing an IDEA framework which will explain how we will work with people of all ages, genders, sexualities, abilities, ethnicities, cultures, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. Our IDEA framework will build on our previous diversity and inclusion framework to increase trust in the VEC through recognising and celebrating diversity.

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The VEC has a history of championing inclusion through initiatives such as our democracy ambassador program. The IDEA framework will support the goals of our education and engagement plans to help our staff and communities thrive.

Figure 2: The VEC conducts a range of outreach sessions like this one at the University of Melbourne's Open Day to help young people enrol to vote.

Goals of the YPEEP

True democracy must include everyone. Worldwide trends show lower voter turnout in people aged 18 to 29. At the 2022 Victorian state election, turnout was almost 2% lower in this age group than at the 2018 state election. The growth of mis- and dis- information also contributes to a difficult experience for first-time voters.

We developed the YPEEP with our YPAG and a variety of partners and youth stakeholders. The goals in this plan show our continued work to establish lifelong patterns of voting for young Victorians. We focus our work on 17- and 18-year-olds enrolling for the first time and young people up to the age of 29 who are voting in their first elections.

To improve electoral participation for young Victorians we must:

- consider them when planning and delivering electoral programs and services
- give them more opportunities to enrol, vote,and engage
- increase education and engagement activities.

> The YPEEP helps us see enrolment, voting and engaging in issues from the perspectives of young people. It will empower us to deliver services and information that meets their needs.

The YPEEP has 3 focus areas:

- access
- knowledge and confidence
- relationships, visibility and representation.

The actions we will take to achieve these goals are outlined under the headings below.

Access

To improve young people's access to electoral services and processes we will:

› improve support and engagement of young people across our communication channels and partner organisations

› review our 17-year-old enrolment birthday program to encourage young people to enrol before they turn 18

› implement an advertising campaign to increase young people's awareness of the 2026 state election.

Knowledge and confidence

To improve young people's electoral knowledge and confidence we will:

› increase enrolment and voting information and resources across VEC channels

› deliver outreach and education to teachers, educators and youth workers

› provide electoral education to younger voters outside school settings

› encourage the early formation of positive voting behaviour by developing young people's civic knowledge and skills within youth organisations

› identify, develop and strengthen partnerships with youth organisations.

Relationships, visibility, and representation

To increase stakeholder relationships, and young people's visibility and representation in electoral matters we will:

› maintain relationships with the YPAG, youth stakeholders and young people, seeking their advice and offering support

› recruit, train, and support young people to work as democracy ambassadors

› work with youth organisations and attend youth events to provide services in priority areas

› offer outreach education in homelessness services for young people and identify gaps in electoral resources for this group.

YPEEP outcomes

At the end of this YPEEP, some of the outcomes we hope to see are:

- young people feeling more engaged in electoral processes and democracy
- more young people (aged 17+) knowing how to enrol and vote
- more young people (aged 17+) feeling confident to enrol and vote
- an increased number of eligible young people enrolled to vote
- an increased rate of voting among eligible young people
- improvements in our engagement, visibility and representation from youth stakeholders
- youth stakeholders with more awareness and understanding of our work and the importance of electoral participation for young people
- youth stakeholders more likely to help young people participate in electoral processes.

Measuring the success of the YPEEP

The Electoral Commissioner, the VEC Executive Management Group and staff are responsible for making sure we achieve the actions in the YPEEP.

We will maintain a progress report for the YPEEP and invite feedback twice a year from the YPAG. We will also publish a yearly progress summary in our VEC annual reports.

This education and engagement plan is guided by its own program logic. The monitoring and evaluation plan includes measures and targets, using data from various sources that we report quarterly, annually and for elections.

For a copy of the program logic, or monitoring and evaluation plan, please contact education@vec.vic.gov.au

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