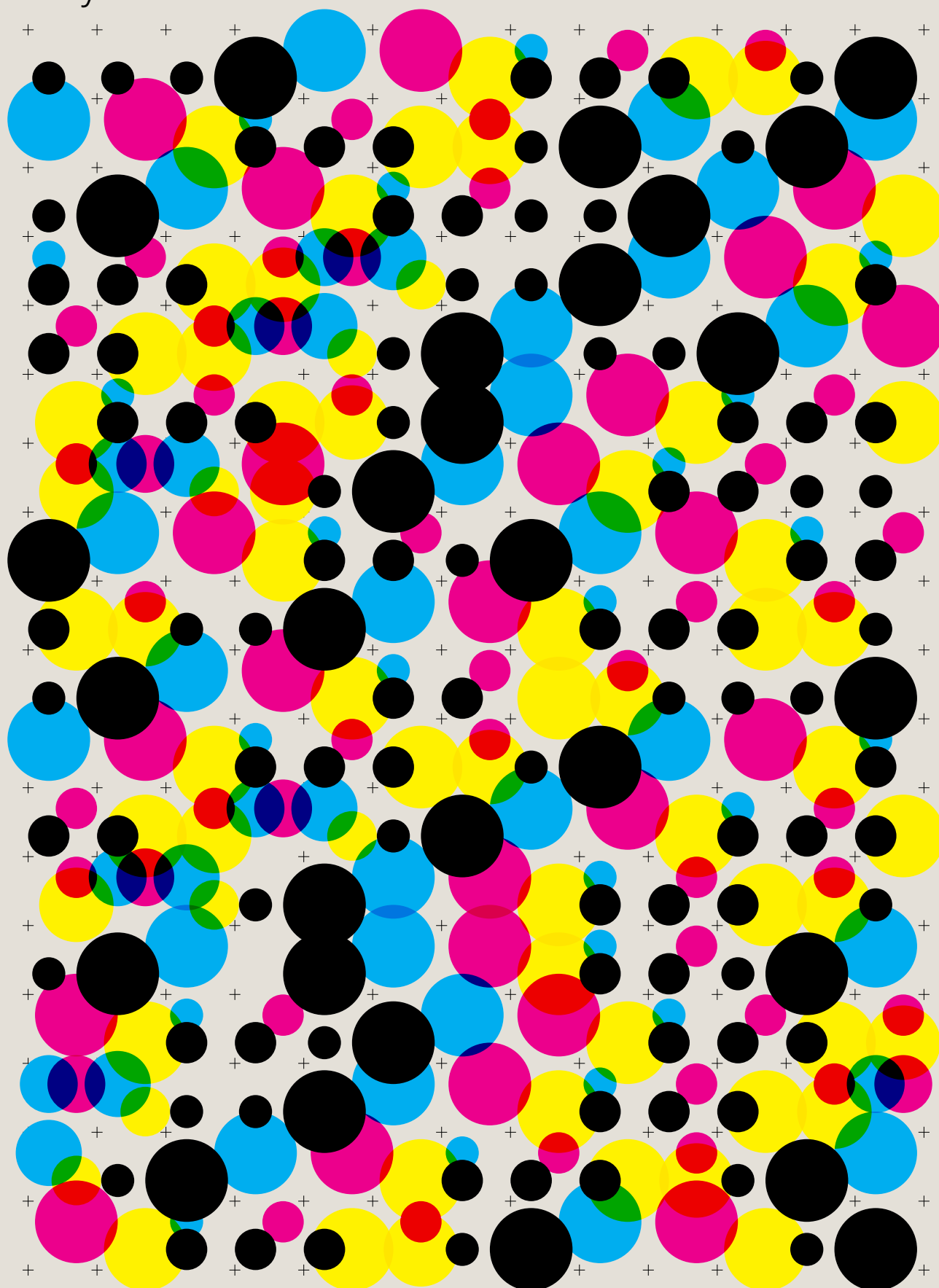# Strategic service plan
Victorian Electoral Commission

May 2025

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.

Strategic service plan

Ward colours (front cover)

For local government elections, ballot materials
are colour-coded by ward to assist with processing.
For the 2024 Local Government elections the ward
colours were changed as part of a broader re-design
project. The composition of each colour was reviewed
to reduce the number of process colours where possible.
This resulted in a significant improvement in production
and resource efficiency, saving cost and time.

The front and back cover visualise the colour composition
of all 465 wards of the 2024 Local Government elections.
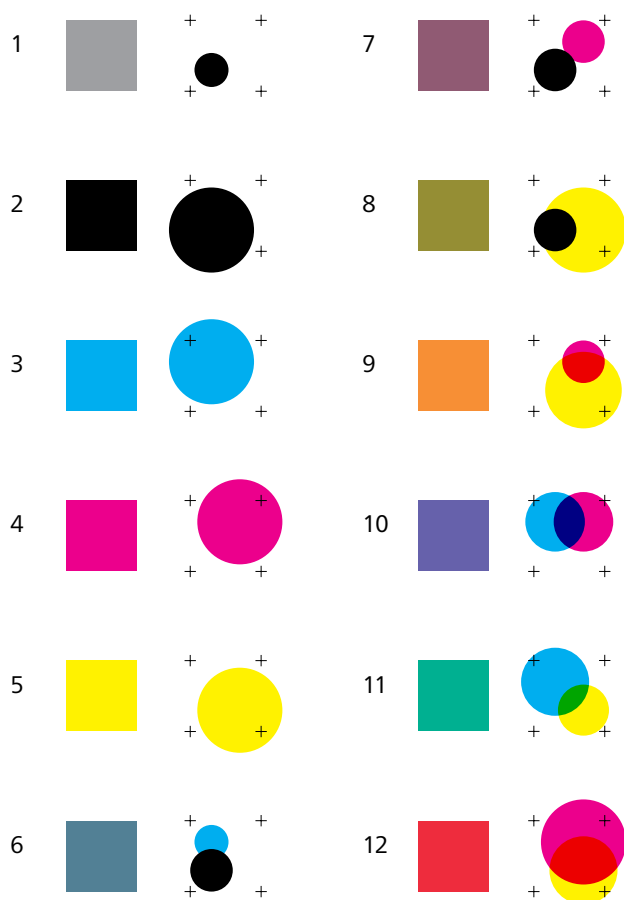
#: Ward number
Square: Ward colour
Graphic: Ward colour composition

Contents

This page is intentionally left blank.

1. Introduction

At the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), our vision is to enable all Victorians to actively participate in their democracy. Regardless of whether we are delivering a state election, a local government election or a by-election, the voter experience should be positive, and our efforts to provide this service should be largely invisible.

Delivering a seamless event requires extensive planning, preparation and coordination. As our operating environment continues to grow increasingly complex, it is important for us to develop longer-term strategic plans to determine how we will respond to these challenges.

This document summarises the major pieces of work that we plan to deliver over the coming years. It reflects the 3- and 5-year planning undertaken to ensure our services continue to evolve to meet the needs of all voters throughout Victoria. We have developed this strategic service plan through extensive consultation, analysis and planning.

A major election event is held every 2 years. Prior to the delivery of each major event, this plan will be supplemented by an election service plan outlining specific delivery timeframes and activities relevant to that event.

For the 2026 State election, we are focusing on the
following areas:

Voting	Increasing where and when voters can cast their vote during the election period, with a focus on greater accessibility for all Victorians.
Counting	Reviewing our approach to counting to ensure the accuracy and integrity of results is maintained despite growing enrolment and changing voter trends. We will uplift our publication of results data and count communications.
Candidates	Identifying opportunities to improve candidates' experiences both prior to, and on election day.
Staffing	Improving the training and upskilling of our staff and ensuring they are working in a safe environment.

In the longer term (for the 2028 local government
elections and the 2030 State election), we will
continue to focus on:

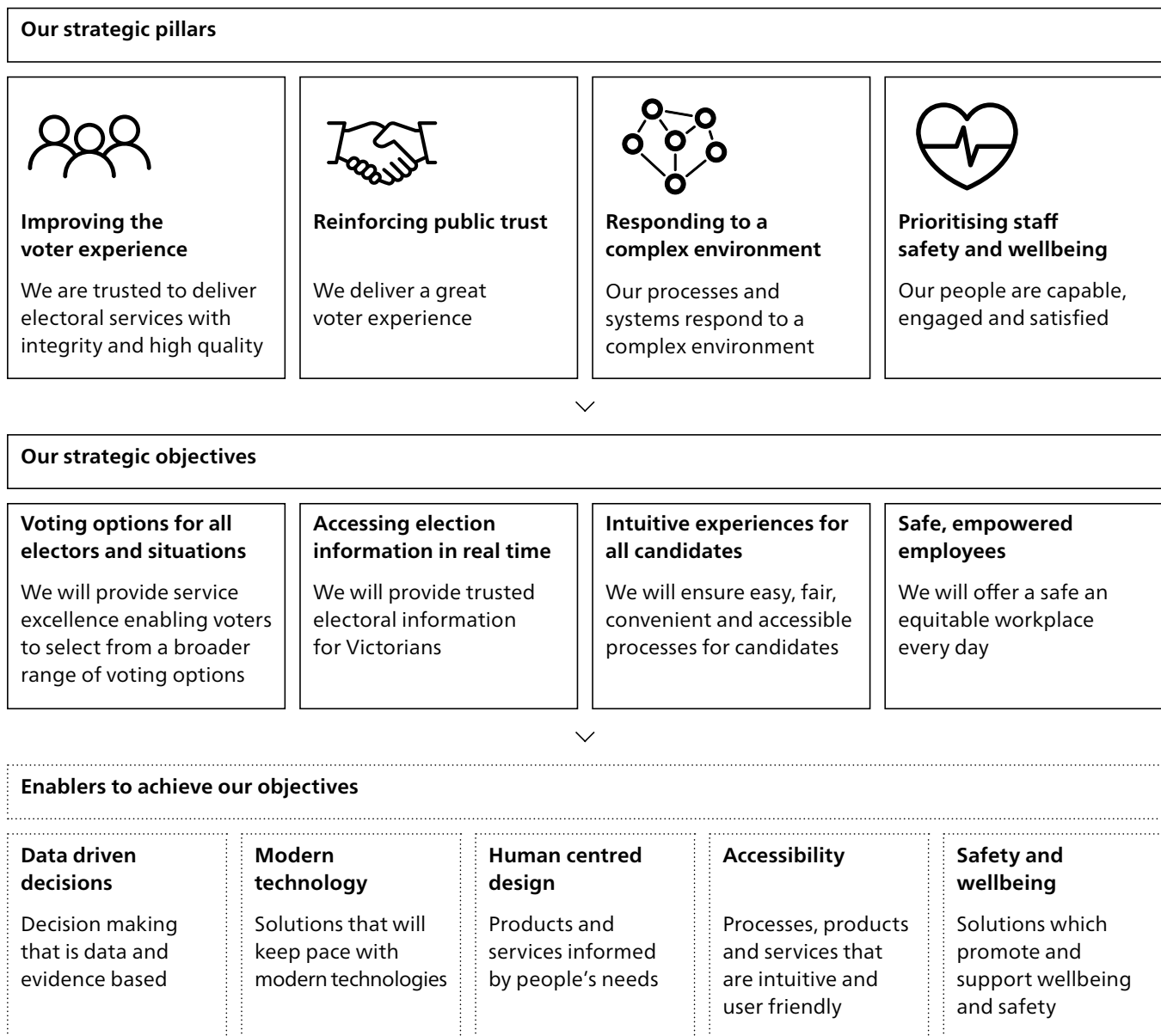|	
Voting	Refining our voting footprint and identifying ways to use technology to support the voting experience.
Printing	Increasing our print and production capability for election material, including ballot papers.
Reporting	Exploring dynamic and self-service reporting functionalities, including publishing provisional results for councils.
Staffing	Identifying ongoing system uplift and automating systems to support our staff and ways of working.

2. Our purpose

Our purpose

We are an independent body established under Victoria's *Electoral Act 2002*. We are responsible for the impartial conduct of Victorian state elections, local council elections and some statutory elections and polls.

We are also responsible for:

› Maintaining the Victorian register of electors (commonly known as the electoral roll).

› Promoting public awareness and understanding of electoral matters.

› Supporting the Electoral Boundaries Commission and electoral representation advisory panels to undertake state redivisions and local government redistricting programs.

› Administering Victoria's political funding and donations disclosure rules.

3. Our strategic pillars and objectives

Our strategic pillars, established by Strategy 2027, form the foundation of our long-term election delivery strategy. Our pillars enable us to prioritise our activities and shape our actions and deliverables.

Our strategic pillars

Improving the voter experience	**Reinforcing public trust**	**Responding to a complex environment**	**Prioritising staff safety and wellbeing**
We are trusted to deliver electoral services with integrity and high quality	We deliver a great voter experience	Our processes and systems respond to a complex environment	Our people are capable, engaged and satisfied

ᐯ

Our strategic objectives

Voting options for all electors and situations	**Accessing election information in real time**	**Intuitive experiences for all candidates**	**Safe, empowered employees**
We will provide service excellence enabling voters to select from a broader range of voting options	We will provide trusted electoral information for Victorians	We will ensure easy, fair, convenient and accessible processes for candidates	We will offer a safe an equitable workplace every day

ᐯ

Enablers to achieve our objectives

Data driven decisions	**Modern technology**	**Human centred design**	**Accessibility**	**Safety and wellbeing**
Decision making that is data and evidence based	Solutions that will keep pace with modern technologies	Products and services informed by people's needs	Processes, products and services that are intuitive and user friendly	Solutions which promote and support wellbeing and safety

---

4. What makes a good election?

While every election is unique, there are some common elements that ensure we deliver a great election for Victorians and our different stakeholder groups.
At our core, electoral integrity is fundamental to all of our planning and delivery.

Integrity		
In processes	In results	In messaging
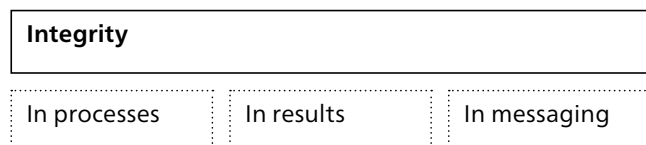
For our key stakeholder groups, we look to achieve the following outcomes at every election event:

Stakeholders	Outcomes
Voters	› Knowledge of when, where and how to vote › Choice and convenience › Accessibility for our communities' diverse needs › An easy and efficient voting process › Clear messaging in a range of forums › Timely and trusted election results
Candidates and political parties	› Efficient and easy registration and nomination › Clear guidelines and advice › Positive, constructive approach to complying with legislative obligations › A safe environment for campaigners › Straightforward access for scrutineers › Timely and trusted election results
The VEC	› High enrolment rate › Accurate electoral rolls › High participation rates › Low rates of informal voting › A safe workplace for all staff › Well trained, confident workforce › Intuitive systems and processes

5. The challenges we face

We know what it takes to deliver a great election;
however, we also acknowledge there are a number of
internal and external challenges we must overcome.

These include:

External challenges	
Mis- and disinformation	Localised and imported electoral mis- and disinformation continue to circulate online and in other forums, decreasing trust in our independence, election processes and results, and electoral integrity.
Trust in public institutions is eroding	While reports from the OECD note that the majority of populations see public institutions as reliable providers of public services, we acknowledge there are risks that trust in electoral institutions and processes may be eroded by events both locally and overseas.[1]
Our operational landscape is complex and changing	The context in which we deliver elections changes rapidly. Our legislative and operational responsibilities, and the requirements of our field delivery teams continue to grow and become more complex.
Our role as a regulator is expanding	Our role as a regulator includes the administration of Victoria's political funding and donation disclosure rules. As our environment becomes more complex, we must continue to meet our obligations to ensure a level playing field.
Electoral participants have high expectations	We will always strive to meet the expectations of electoral participants. As our world becomes increasingly digitised and the demand for immediate information increases, the expectations of electoral participants for automation, faster results and customer service are higher than ever.
Technology modernisation and cyber security	There are increasing expectations from stakeholders that more of our services are offered online or in ways that enable easier engagement. While we continue to explore solutions and manage our technological roadmap, we are mindful of the need to protect our information from cyber threats.

---

1   OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results, Building Trust in a complex Policy Environment

Internal challenges

Cyclical nature of election events	Election delivery requires intense focus and absorbs significant resources above all other activities. This can impact our ability to deliver longterm projects or uplift.
Our ability to efficiently scale	To deliver a state election, we must recruit up to 25,000 people. Recruiting, training and supporting such a high volume of staff requires systems, processes and effective training solutions that can be rapidly scaled to meet our workforce's needs.
Our workforce is changing	Like many employers, we continue to face challenges in recruiting casual staff. The changing needs of our traditional casual pool who may be retiring later or have caring responsibilities impacts the availability of longer-term casual staff. The demands of our complex and high-pressure environment can also impact staff availability and suitability.
Staff wellbeing	There is significant pressure on us to deliver high quality elections within short timeframes, which can impact on the wellbeing of our staff. Staff must manage the increasing demands of voters and electoral participants, making psychological and physical health and safety a key challenge.

6. Ensuring we are election ready

The VEC has moved from a 2-year planning cycle to a 3- and 5-year planning cycle to ensure that we are delivering the best election for voters, candidates and staff.

To support this work, we undertake a number of activities in the lead up to every major event to ensure we are as ready as possible.

These activities include:

› Election rehearsals, which we undertake at least 7 months prior to every major election event to test electoral processes and systems.

› Annual recruitment of senior election officials to ensure appointment and training can commence 6-8 months prior to an election, providing sufficient time for our staff to have the skills and confidence to perform their role.

› Scheduled testing, assurance and performance monitoring of our systems throughout the year to ensure they will perform as expected when demand is at its highest.

› Engagement with key suppliers and partners to ensure service agreements and contracts are in place for a range of specialist services, such as postal and courier services , printing, recruitment, and mail house. To ensure we can effectively respond to legal or regulatory issues, we also have arrangements with agencies such as the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, Victoria Police, Local Government Inspectorate (LGI), and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

› Continuously identifying opportunities to ensure our elections are environmentally sustainable. This includes where we source paper and cardboard, sustainable transportation of materials, and re-use and recycling of materials wherever possible.

› Sourcing venues that are cost-effective, accessible and fit for purpose to support the efficient and safe delivery of events for voters, election participants, and our staff.

Rigorous evaluation of our performance following major events through facilitated workshops, surveys and statistical analysis of key metrics to ensure we capture learning opportunities and effectively plan for future events.

7. Improving our election delivery

To meet the needs of our stakeholder groups, deliver great elections and overcome our identified challenges, we plan to undertake the following activities over the next 5 years. Due to the medium-term nature of some of these commitments we have provided an anticipated implementation date.

Strategic objective 1
Voting options for all voters and situations

What this will look like

› Voters have accessible, safe and technology
  assisted options.

› Voters are informed about the election and
  electoral process.

› Voters are engaged and aware of civic rights
  and responsibilities.

› Voting is accessible.

What we plan to deliver

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Redefine our voting footprint	The 2022 State election was the first Victorian election where voting on election day was not the most common voting method. The number of people voting early has increased each election since the 2-week early voting period was implemented in 1999. At the 2022 State election, 49.5% of all voters turned out to vote in-person during the early voting period. A similar trend is also occurring at federal elections, with an increase of 15.6 percentage points in the number of Victorians voting early, up from 37.22% in 2019 to 52.83% in 2022. Our initial modelling suggests as many as 60% of all voters may choose to vote in-person at an early voting centre at the 2026 State election.	*2026 State election* › Increase the number of early voting centres located across Victoria from 150 to over 250 sites and ensure new early voting centre locations can accommodate accessible, in-person voting wherever possible. › Offer extended voting hours throughout the early voting period to meet community expectations. › Expand operations at early voting centres to include candidate nominations (during the nomination period) and election day voting › Transition stand-alone election offices into centralised hubs responsible for multiple voting centres. › Establish a centralised activity site for use as a multi-purpose venue at each stage of the election - from induction of new staff to counting of ballots and declaration of results. › Trial new processes to track and reduce queuing times. *2030 State election* › Further refine our voting footprint based on the outcomes and learnings at the 2026 State election.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Review of mobile voting	Mobile voting activities were reduced for the 2022 State election due to operational risks resulting from the global pandemic. In consultation with the AEC and other electoral commissions we are exploring options to re-introduce mobile voting in hospitals and some prisons.	*2026 State election* › Review our mobile voting policy to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose, reflects changes to the operating environment and aligns with both the AEC's policy and community expectations.
Conduct research to identify barriers to entry	We will continue to identify the barriers preventing voters from participating in elections, and how we can remove them. We will take into consideration the cohorts identified as part of Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) recommendations, with a focus on voters from underrepresented communities.	*2026 State election* › Appoint Democracy Ambassadors as permanent roles delivering education and engagement sessions to increase electoral literacy and enrolment for priority community groups. › Conduct further research on the barriers preventing voter participation. › Implement new activities based on research findings to reduce the barriers to entry. For example, trialling low-sensory voting during the early voting period to support neurodiverse communities.
Redesign of ballot material	We are planning to review and redesign state election ballot papers and associated materials in order to: › Improve usability and understanding. › Increase the options and speed of ballot printing. › Enhance ballot paper management and reconciliation.	*2026 State election* › Redesign the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council ballot papers into distinct, separate products to increase legibility for the voter and improve our printing, handling and throughput. › Expand the number of print suppliers we work with and develop an in-house print capability to increase our range of printing options.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Refined counting locations and practices	In alignment with changes to our voting footprint and ballot papers, we will need to undertake a review of counting locations and practices. Aligned to EMC recommendations, there are opportunities to enhance data collection for both reporting and future counting model development.	*2026 State election* › Publish a full count plan at the commencement of the election and clearly communicate any changes to candidates, registered political parties and other interested parties. › Conduct full preference distributions in all Legislative Assembly elections. › Introduce joint early voting centres to reduce the amount of 'out-of-district' early votes that need to move through the centralised vote exchange for counting (Legislative Assembly) and centralise Legislative Council counting activities. › Publish improved key performance metrics. *2028 local government elections* › Explore scanning solutions to improve counting accuracy and speed.
Enhanced print capability	We continue to be challenged by the volume of ballot material which must be printed and distributed between the close of nominations and the start of early voting. In response to the challenges with the print process for the 2022 State election and print and mail insertion for the 2024 local government elections, we will implement a range of changes to enhance our in-house print capability and printing options for future elections. We acknowledge and support the EMC's recommendation that we ensure that the total number of ballot papers produced for future elections does not contribute to ballot paper shortages.	*2025 local government by-elections* › Trial in-house printing for some election material. *2026 State election* › Identify options to streamline ballot printing and mail insertion production. Initially, focused on the design of election products (to maximise output), followed with the diversification of suppliers to reduce the overall risks associated with limited suppliers. › Deploy initiatives that provide greater visibility of the management, movement and handling of ballot material during the election cycle. *2028 local government elections and 2030 State election* › Assess our print capability and in-house print expertise based on the outcomes and learnings from the 2026 State election and any local government by-elections.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Telephone assisted voting	We continue to advocate for the availability of telephone assisted voting for voters who face barriers to participating in elections. We will take a measured approach when advocating for increased eligibility for those cohorts who may otherwise be unable to vote.	*2030 State election* › Review the provision of telephone assisted voting as a channel for voters and implement any necessary changes to ensure the service can be scalable and can support identified cohorts such as Antarctic electors. › Continue to advocate for legislative change to expand the eligibility criteria for accessing telephone assisted voting as a voting channel.
Electronic assisted and technology enabled voting options	In an increasingly digital world, voters expect digital solutions to improve accessibility and reduce the time between voting and results. We will continue to explore options to meet voter expectations and advocate for legislative change where needed.	*2030 State election* › Undertake research into technology enabled voting options available within Australian and overseas, with the view of developing an implementation roadmap. › Advocate, where required, for the necessary legislative change to allow for the implementation of technology enabled voting options.
Venue and resource management	We will continue to identify ways to improve internal systems and processes to ensure our resources can be deployed efficiently at election events, reaffirming our commitment to the sustainable use of resources.	*2026 State election* › Invest significantly in ensuring the better allocation and management of resources. › Identify opportunities to reduce the overall transportation effort required to support election events.

Strategic objective 2
Accessing electoral information in real time

What this will look like

› Accurate, tailored, timely, inclusive and trusted electoral information can be accessed in real time.

› The electoral roll is complete and accurate.

› Where possible, traditionally manual processes are automated.

› Process improvement activities are planned, implemented and evaluated to ensure benefits are realised.

› Decision making is considered and based on data.

What we plan to deliver

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Local council by-election seasons	The increase in single-councillor ward structures will result in a significant shift from countbacks to by-elections as the method of filling extraordinary vacancies in most councils. As a result, we forecast a significant increase in the number of local council by-elections required, increasing the strain on our current resources. To improve efficiency and reduce costs, we plan to group local council by-elections to run on the same timeline at scheduled points each year. By bringing election staff together, reusing materials, and standardising our processes, we can reduce costs and run elections more efficiently.	*2025 local government by-elections* › Schedule by-election seasons on a rolling schedule every 2 months, supported by a documented framework and legal determination. › Communicate the change in process to the sector through Local Government Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Government Association.
Evergreen instructional products	To reduce rework and duplication, we will update instructional and other election products into reusable templates, processes and procedures whenever possible.	*2026 State election and 2028 local government elections* › Produce a standardised library of instructional products, training material and guidelines for state and local government elections.
Ballot material management	To keep ballot materials secure and properly stored, a solution is needed to track materials between print vendor(s), our warehouse and voting sites.	*2026 State election* › Implement a VEC-specific materials tracking system to monitor movement between defined locations and integrate with our existing systems.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Roll management uplift	The Victorian register of electors and electoral rolls must be accurate, regularly updated and compliant. To achieve this, we will undertake a program of work on our roll management system and engage with the AEC to align with and use the national roll. Some of these improvements may require legislative change, and we will advocate for this where needed.	*2026 State election* › Align the AEC and VEC rolls to ensure consistency between the 2 rolls, and transfer some of our administrative functions to the AEC. › Upgrade technology supporting our roll management system through a structured improvement program. › Review our legislated data release obligations to ensure our practices remain compliant and aligned with requirements. *2028 local government elections* › Explore opportunities to better support councils to produce electoral rolls.
Electronic roll mark off	We are committed to expanding electronic roll markoff solution to more voting centres on election day. This will provide real time visibility of ballot paper consumption, reduce the risk of accidental or intentional multiple voting and reduce the administrative burden of voting enforcement activity after the election.	*2026 State election* › Redevelop our electronic roll mark-off system to enable large-scale deployment at the 2026 State election for both early and election day voting. *2030 State election* › Based on the lessons from the 2026 State election we will expand electronic roll mark-off and identify further opportunities to improve user and voter experience.
Geographic Information System uplift	Our current Geographic Information System (GIS) software is outdated and relies on manual workarounds. We have identified improvements that will allow us to implement new spatial technology and better integrate it with our other systems.	*2026 State election* › Invest in our GIS software to produce higher quality maps for internal and external stakeholders and integrate geospatial capability and access to geospatial data more effectively across our operations.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Election Management System uplift	We will continue to develop and improve our Election Management System (EMS), making short- and long-term upgrades to automate processing, boost efficiency and strengthen security.	*2026 State election* › Adopt and implement a modern Identity and Access Management security framework to streamline and automate user identity and access management. *2028 local government elections* › Explore options for real time, self-service reporting tools, including live data collection and dashboards for internal and external reporting. › Explore options for publishing provisional results for local council elections.
Centralised command centre	At the 2024 local council elections, we tested a centralised command centre to support electoral integrity activities and handle complaints. We will review this trial to decide how this should be implemented as a standard way of working for future election events, supporting our commitment to positive engagement and constructive compliance.	*2026 State election* › Establish an operational command centre based on the National Incident Emergency Management System to coordinate responses to incidents during the delivery phase of an election.
Management of mis- and disinformation	Given continuing impacts of localised and imported mis- and disinformation, we will continue to identify ways to counter these threats, preserve public trust in election outcomes and ensure that our activities are not undermined.	*2026 State election* › In collaboration with other EMBs, academic and communication experts, we will continue to test strategies to counter mis- and disinformation campaigns.

Strategic objective 3
Intuitive experiences for all candidates

What this will look like

› Easy, fair, convenient and accessible processes for candidates.

› Everyone involved in elections plays by the rules.

› Legislative requirements are met for party and candidate management.

What we plan to deliver

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Analysis and review of the candidate journey	To improve the experience of candidates interacting with our processes, we will conduct a detailed analysis and review of the customer journey for candidates. This will help us better understand the pain points and identify opportunities for improvement in line with the EMC's recommendations, such as refining information products and communication processes for candidates and parties.	*2026 State election* › Map the customer journey for candidates and identify opportunities for improvement. We will ensure clear and consistent messaging is a priority, along with ample training opportunities for all candidates. *2030 State election* › Explore ways to consolidate all candidate information and processes into a single location on our website or a dedicated online portal.
Bulk candidate nominations redevelopment	Feedback from stakeholders and high levels of user support suggests the existing nomination application process is not fit-for-purpose.	*2026 State election* › Identify and deploy improvements to the bulk candidate nominations process and application by reducing manual processes and other administrative burdens.
Results and computer count enhancements	Based on the research and recommendations to refine our count capabilities, we will upgrade our computer count capabilities. We also acknowledge the EMC's recommendation to require audits of computer count data, and will further explore possibilities to implement this.	*2026 State election* › Complete enhancements to our computer count system. *2028 local government elections and 2030 State election* › Assess options for statistically rigorous audits of computer count data and determine the best way to report on results.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Managing relationships between election officials and candidates, campaigners and scrutineers	We understand and support the essential role of candidates, campaigners and scrutineers and we are committed to enabling them to better navigate the electoral system. In alignment with the EMC's recommendations, we will undertake a number of activities to support and enhance the experiences of candidates, campaigners and scrutineers when interacting with our processes.	*2026 State election* › Upgrade training materials for election managers and officials to foster collaboration and strengthen their relationship with electoral participants. This will reflect a clear process for escalating complaints involving election officials, candidates, campaigners and scrutineers. › Refine the campaigner and scrutineer registration process to meet our occupational health and safety obligations while providing an easy and trusted process for campaigners. *2030 State election* › Implement a system to actively monitor campaigner behaviour and breaches of electoral rules, reducing a reliance on anecdotal reporting. › Introduce a quick and easy online registration system for campaigners and scrutineers, enabling better identification for campaign management purposes.
How-to-vote card publication and management	Currently, the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) requires campaigners at state elections to register how-to-vote cards with the VEC. With increasing candidate numbers, the tight registration timeframes create significant administrative challenges for registered political parties, candidates and our staff. We acknowledge and support the EMC's recommendation to remove the requirement to register how-to-vote cards for distribution at election day voting centres and will advocate for this legislative change.	*2026 State election* › Enhance our website's capability to publish how-to-vote card more efficiently. *2030 State election* › Update processes and procedures to reflect any legislative changes, including the potential removal of the how-to-vote card registration process.

Strategic objective 4
Safe and empowered employees

What this will look like

› We offer a safe, equitable workplace every day,
no matter the location, the timing, or the people.

› Our team are physically and mentally safe, regardless
of whether they are working online or in person.

› Our election delivery workforce is available and
appropriately trained.

› We have effective coordination and distribution
of staff across roles and processes.

What we plan to deliver

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Equipping our staff with the skills they require	As our operating environment becomes more complex, so do the demands on our workforce. To equip our staff with the skills they require, we will undertake a number of activities to ensure a structured and scalable solution.	*2026 State election* › Implement the findings and recommendations from the internal audit of election manager training. › Conduct a skills gap analysis, using psychometric testing and embed integrity measures to professionalise the election workforce. *2026 State election* › Develop a continuing professional development program for our core staff to strengthen internal capability. *2030 State election* › Assess the technical skills needed to work with new technologies and process changes. This will include ongoing research into automation and system changes to improve our ways of working.

Activity	Rationale	Targeted commitments
Growing our senior election official pool	Resourcing, maintaining and upskilling our senior election official pool to a satisfactory level remains a challenge. Workforce trends, as well as the demands on our senior election officials contribute to these difficulties. We will review how we can sustainably grow and diversify the senior election official pool while nurturing our existing talent.	*2026 State election* › Analyse workforce trends to shape future recruitment strategies and explore alternative resourcing models. *2026 State election and 2028 local government elections* › Review the senior election official pool strategy and consider a tiered system to support the expanding scope of our work in both state and local council elections.
Supporting staff safety	We remain committed to the occupational and psychological health and safety of all staff. Staff wellbeing will continue to be a priority in both daily operations and the high pressure periods of election delivery.	*2026 State election* › Following the successful deployment at the 2024 local council elections, roll out staff training of our Safe@Work psychological health and safety program, along with electronic reporting for occupational health and safety incidents and near misses.

This page is intentionally left blank.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Victorian
Electoral
Commission