

2026 State election

Campaigner handbook

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Glossary

Term	Definition
The Act	The <i>Electoral Act 2002</i> (Vic)
Authorisation statement	Electoral material (digital and print) requires an 'authorisation statement'. This means including the name and address of the person who authorised the material. This person can be a natural person, body politic or a body corporate (e.g. a registered political party, company or organisation). The name and physical address of the authoriser form the authorisation statement.
Campaigner	A person who canvasses for votes, including on behalf of a candidate, political party or organisation.
Candidate	A person who is nominated under section 69 of the Act to stand for election to Parliament. This includes: - party-endorsed candidates who have been nominated in an election by a registered political party - independent candidates who are not endorsed by a registered political party and have nominated in an election.
Canvassing	Campaigning for votes at an election for a candidate or political party.
Canvassing-free zone (6 metre rule)	The area within 6 metres of the designated entrance to a voting centre, or the grounds on which a voting centre is located, as well as the entire area within the voting centre. This 6 metre distance may be reduced.
Designated entrance	The nominated entry point to a voting centre as specified by the VEC. Permitted conduct outside a voting centre depends on the distance from the designated entrance. A voting centre may have more than one designated entrance and the designated entrance may apply to the entry to the building or the entry to the grounds on which the voting centre is located.
Early voting centre	Electors can vote before election day at any early voting centre across Victoria up to 6 pm on the day before election day.
Early voting liaison officer	An election official responsible for monitoring operations at early voting centres to ensure the consistent application of election procedures across venues.

Term	Definition
Election day	The official day of an election, named in the election writ. Voting closes at 6 pm on election day. Election day for the 2026 state election is Saturday 28 November.
Election hub	A single venue combining 1–4 election offices for nearby districts.
Election liaison officer	An election official responsible for visiting election day voting centres to monitor operations, identify and report resource needs to election managers, deliver materials where required, and ensure consistent application of election procedures across voting centres.
Election manager	The person appointed by the Electoral Commissioner to be responsible for the administration of a district election. Each election manager in a region is responsible for administering the region election.
Election office	The location where the election manager conducts the election. There is one election office for each district election, and it may be located in an election hub containing election offices for multiple districts. Details of each election office will be on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au and in election advertisements.
Election official	A person appointed by the VEC to work at an election.
Elector	A person enrolled to vote at an election.
Electoral material	Electoral material includes: • paid advertisements containing electoral matter • printed materials containing electoral matter, including a leaflet, flyer, pamphlet, notice or poster • materials produced by or on behalf of registered political parties, candidates, groups, elected members, associated entities, third-party campaigners and donors, even if it is not paid or printed.
Electoral matter	Any content which is intended or likely to influence how someone votes at an election.
Field compliance officer	Field compliance officers will monitor behaviour outside voting centres during voting hours. These officers are specially trained election officials who will work to ensure that everyone around a voting centre is complying with their obligations. Their focus will be on generating co-operation consistent with the VECs constructive compliance approach, and facilitating prompt escalation and referral for more complex matters that cannot be resolved locally.

Term	Definition
How-to-vote card (HTVC)	Any electoral material that: - includes a representation of a ballot paper, including partial or purported partial representations of a ballot paper or - lists the names of any or all of the candidates for an election with a number indicating an order of voting preference against the names of any or all of those candidates.
Independent candidate	A candidate not endorsed by a registered political party.
Limited sign zone (100 metre rule)	A rule which limits the number and size of signs that can be displayed within 100 metres of a designated entrance to a voting centre.
Low-sensory mobile voting	A mobile voting option where the voting centre environment is adjusted for voters who are neurodiverse.
Mobile billboard	Any billboard that is capable of being displayed while being transported by any means. This includes billboards attached to vehicles such as bicycles or cars, vehicles that are painted or vinyl wrapped, as well as billboards that can be worn by a person or animal. It does not include stickers on vehicles.
Penalty unit	A unit used to define the amount payable for fines for many offences recorded in Victorian legislation. The dollar amount of a penalty unit is published on 1 July every year.
Registered political party	A political party that is on the VEC's Register of Political Parties. Registration entitles a political party to have the registered party details, including a registered logo, placed next to its candidate(s) names on district ballot paper(s) or above the group name above the line on region ballot paper(s).
The Regulations	The Electoral Regulations 2022 (Vic).
Scrutineer	A person appointed by a candidate to observe certain procedures on the candidate's behalf at an election. Scrutineers are permitted to observe voting, scrutiny and counting procedures during an election.
Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC)	The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is responsible for the conduct of parliamentary and local council elections in Victoria. The Electoral Commissioner is the head of the VEC.

Term	Definition
Voting centre	A venue appointed by the VEC for voting at an election, including: • early voting centres, available to all electors until 6 pm the day before election day • election day voting centres, available to all electors from 8 am to 6 pm on election day • mobile voting centres, temporarily available to specified classes of electors who may experience barriers to accessing other voting methods.

1. Introduction

The information in this handbook is to help campaigners prepare for their role in the 2026 Victorian state election. The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) administers these elections and has produced this resource.

Campaigners, also known as party or campaign workers, or canvassers, are a familiar sight outside voting centres, distributing how-to-vote cards and engaging with electors as they approach to cast their vote. Candidates in elections are often active campaigners throughout the election period.

Campaigners can be anyone: volunteer supporters, party officials, lobbyists, members of interest groups, a candidate's family member or even the candidate themselves. Some will have previous experience and know what to expect and what to do during the voting period, but others won't.

Topics covered include:

- what campaigners can expect at a VEC-operated venue
- expected campaigner behaviour
- prohibited actions while canvassing
- safety considerations and planning ahead
- escalation pathways.

This handbook is intended to provide useful information for campaigners and be a quick reference guide in the field.

2. Campaigning and the law

As a campaigner, you play an important part in Victoria's democratic process through advocating for – and against – participants in an election or electoral matters facing voters.

Victoria's electoral law is set out in several pieces of legislation, including the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) (the Act) and Electoral Regulations 2022 (the Regulations).

The Act sets out strict rules governing certain campaigning activities including:

- voting centre signage limits (see **10.3 Limited sign zone (100 metre rule)**)
- authorisation of campaign material (see **Chapter 13. Electoral material and authorisation**)
- distributing material outside voting centres (see **14.1 Distribution of how-to-vote cards**).

The Act also sets out specific requirements for conduct near voting centres, with penalties for non-compliance and actions available to election officials and police in response to non-compliance. Refer to **Chapter 10. Conduct near voting centres** for more information on the rules that apply at early, mobile and election day voting centres.

As a campaigner, you must be aware of the canvassing rules that apply at all voting centres. If you are planning to participate in this election as a campaigner, including for a candidate, party or interest group, we strongly recommend you familiarise yourself with this handbook's content before campaigning.

You can find further information on the VEC website, including an animated explainer with reminders and planning tips for campaigners.

Information on legislation is available from: vec.vic.gov.au/about-us/legislation

3. VEC field staff

This chapter explains the role of some key election staff involved with operating voting centres and delivering electoral services. Campaigners may see these VEC officials in and around voting centres during the voting period, managing operations, liaising with campaigners and assisting voters.

The VEC encourages campaigners and election officials to develop a collaborative and respectful relationship in performing their duties. This will assist early identification of issues and improve the overall campaigner and voter experience. All participants benefit from seeing positive interactions between campaigners and staff.

As a campaigner, you might interact with these VEC officials in the field.

Election manager

The election manager (EM) has overall responsibility for delivery of early, mobile and election day voting services in a district. They have advanced training to manage electoral operations. They are based at an election office, located within an election hub.

Early voting centre manager

Each early voting centre is managed by an early voting centre manager (EVCN) and assistant early voting centre manager (AEVCN). They are responsible for all operational matters at their early voting centre, including assisting voters and liaising with campaigners. They report to the election manager.

Voting centre manager

Each election day voting centre is the responsibility of a voting centre manager (VCM) and assistant voting centre manager (AVCM). They manage all operational matters at their voting centre on election day, including liaising with campaigners, monitoring compliance and managing scrutineers after the close of voting. They report to the election manager.

Liaison officer

The early voting liaison officer (EVLO) and election liaison officer (ELO) report to and represent the election manager during early voting and on election day. Their role is to visit designated voting centres in the district and provide active support and guidance to the EVCN or VCM.

Field compliance officer

Field compliance officers are appointed by the VEC to monitor and support activities in and around voting centres during early voting and on election day, to ensure people involved in the election are complying with the laws in the Act.

A field compliance officer has specialist training and will be based at the election hub. They may be directed by the VEC to attend a specific venue in response to issues which have been identified. Their focus is on generating cooperation, consistent with the VEC's constructive compliance approach. They will also facilitate prompt escalation and referral for more complex matters than cannot be resolved locally.

4. Expected behaviour

The VEC fosters a positive and constructive approach with candidates, political parties and campaigners during elections. However, in recent years many voters have made complaints about unwelcome candidate and campaigner behaviour outside voting centres.

These negative reports led to calls for a code of conduct to frame acceptable campaigner behaviour and to improve the voter experience.

In response, in May 2026 we invited registered officers and deputy registered officers of all political parties registered in Victoria at the time to participate in a workshop. Parties were asked to send up to three representatives to the two-day event. Party representatives, including experienced campaigners and campaign officials, defined the problem together, shared expectations and worked on solutions.

Attendees developed and agreed upon a set of recommendations. For the full, unedited report, see **4.1 Participants' final recommendations**. The result is a set of standards of behaviour which will benefit all participants: voters, campaigners and election officials.

Participants made 7 recommendations committing to:

- respecting voters' rights
- respecting the role and views of all campaigners
- respecting the duties and role of VEC staff
- knowing their legal obligations and accepting accountability
- rejecting threatening and intimidating behaviour
- considering campaigner numbers at voting centres
- fostering a positive experience for all.

The VEC expects all participants to treat each other with courtesy, respect and civility. It is a shared responsibility among all participants and election officials to build and maintain these relationships. The recommendations and commitments made by workshop participants can be used by individual campaigners to regulate their own behaviour and conduct, and will guide election officials on the expectations that campaigners have for themselves and each other.

Refer to **Chapter 10. Conduct near voting centres** for the rules on conduct near voting centres.

4.1 Participants' final recommendations

The following three pages contain the full, unedited report provided by workshop participants to the VEC.

Campaigner handbook workshop

Final recommendations

How can we ensure that campaigner behaviour outside voting centres is in keeping with community expectations?

Background

The VEC invited all parties to nominate delegates to participate in a workshop coordinated by a team of independent facilitators to develop guidelines for acceptable campaigner behaviour that meet community expectations at voting centres. A range of political parties gathered over the course of two days and agreed on the seven recommendations that follow.

1 Respect voters' rights

Commitment: Allow voters to access the voting centre without obstruction, harassment or intimidation.

How does this meet community expectations? Ensures people feel comfortable coming to a voting centre to vote.

The law requires voters to attend; campaigners are to make it easy for them to attend.

We will not tolerate: Invading voters' personal space.

Physically obstructing or detaining voters.

If it continues? Parties and candidates are primarily responsible for managing the conduct of their campaigners.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners; VEC staff; authorised party representatives

2 Respect role of campaigners

Commitment: Recognise that campaigners for all parties and candidates play an important role in promoting Victorian democracy.

Recognise that all campaigners are entitled to promote their views, ideas and candidates.

Respect the right of other campaigners to speak with voters and solicit their votes.

Respect the right of campaigners to hold and promote different views.

How does this meet community expectations? Everyone has the right to participate safely in Victorian elections.

We will not tolerate: Campaigners interfering with the ability of others to promote their views, candidates and solicit votes at a voting centre.

Campaigners preventing voters interacting with campaigners and candidates for other parties and candidates.

If it continues? Initially notify campaign team officials. If behaviour continues or escalates notify voting centre manager.

Parties and candidates are to take responsibility for removing difficult campaigners from voting centres.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners; VEC staff; authorised party representatives

3 Respect duties and role of VEC staff

Commitment: Treat VEC staff with respect and recognise the important role they play in the electoral process.

All campaigners, candidates and parties must comply with the lawful directions of VEC staff.

Parties and candidates will cooperate with the VEC to resolve any issues raised with them as quickly as possible.

How does this meet community expectations? VEC staff at voting centres have to give every Victorian the chance to vote easily and safely.

Campaigners should help to make sure that Victorian elections work for everyone.

We will not tolerate: Campaigners obstructing VEC staff in their duties; intimidation or disrespect towards VEC staff.

If it continues? Parties and candidates should encourage all campaigners to treat members of the VEC staff with respect, and work to discourage poor behaviour.

In the case of any unlawful acts towards VEC staff, the VEC may notify police.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners

4 Accountability of campaigners

Commitment: Know and respect the laws and regulations that apply to campaigning. Comply with the 6 metre exclusion zone, rules on signage at voting centres, restrictions on what material can be handed to voters, and laws relating to harassment, obstruction and intimidation.

Campaigners commit to being accountable for upholding electoral law.

How does this meet community expectations? The community expects campaigners to follow electoral law or otherwise be held accountable.

Campaigners should help to make sure that Victorian elections work for everyone.

We will not tolerate: Wilful violations of electoral law.

If it continues? Serious incidents should be reported to campaign officials, or where appropriate the VEC voting centre manager or police.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners; authorised party representatives

5 Reject threatening and intimidating behaviour

Commitment: Be respectful towards voters, voting centre staff and other campaigners, including those with opposing political views.

Campaigners should be guided by advice given by their party or candidate about how to manage issues at voting centres.

How does this meet community expectations? No one participating in an election should be made to feel intimidated, harassed or threatened.

Being considerate of others fosters a pleasurable and enjoyable democratic election process for everyone.

We will not tolerate: Harassment, threatening or intimidating behaviour.

If it continues? Campaigners report this behaviour to campaign officials first, or where appropriate the VEC voting centre manager or police.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners; authorised party representatives

6 Consider campaigner numbers at voting centres

Commitment: When allocating campaigners to a voting centre, parties and candidates should consider:

- the location and physical constraints of a voting centre
- the total number of campaigners
- the experience of the voter.

How does this meet community expectations? This ensures voters are not overwhelmed by the number of campaigners at voting centre entrances.

It ensures there is a reasonable opportunity for all campaigners for all candidates to convey their message to voters.

We will not tolerate: Large number of campaigners behaving in a way that obstructs access to a voting centre, or intimidates or harasses voters.

If it continues? Campaigners alert campaign officials for their party or candidate of overcrowding at a voting centre.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners

7 Foster a positive experience for all

Commitment: Demonstrate good behaviour. Campaigners and candidates should be considerate and respectful to voters, VEC staff and each other.

How does this meet community expectations? By being considerate and respectful of each other, it fosters a more enjoyable and safe experience for all. Campaigners recognise the shared commitment to fostering democracy.

We will not tolerate: Threatening and aggressive behaviour.

If it continues? Campaigners notify parties and candidates and remind them what good behaviour looks like.

Applies to: Candidates and parties; campaigners

4.2 Tips for campaigners

- Read the *Campaigner handbook* and campaigner webpage before starting the role.
- Understand the rules and expectations.
- Comply with all relevant legal requirements.
- Respect the right of all voters to feel safe while voting.
- Choose to engage respectfully with all participants at VEC-managed venues.
- Prioritise safety. Work with the VEC to maintain a safe and civil voting environment for all, free of intimidation or abuse.
- Take responsibility for own requirements while campaigning. Access to toilets, water, shelter and shade at venues is prioritised, but cannot be guaranteed.
- Attend campaigner briefings conducted by VEC officials at voting venues.
- Disseminate electoral material which is correctly authorised and registered when required. Authorisation makes clear who is accountable for the material.
- Provide accurate and clear information in all campaign material and messaging. Do not distribute material that is likely to mislead voters into voting incorrectly.
- Display signs that are permitted by law and are within the relevant limits for signs displayed within 100 metres of the designated entrance of a voting venue.
- Ensure venue access for voters is clear and without obstructions. Maintain situational awareness on footpaths, near carparks and roads.
- Behave respectfully towards other candidates and campaigners, including not interfering with campaign signage of others.
- Demonstrate compliance and cooperation. Report instances of alleged non-compliance through appropriate and available reporting channels, including by lodging a complaint with the VEC.

5. Voting

The timeline for a state election is set out in the Act. The total timeframe to conduct a state election is 46 days and includes a strictly defined period for voting.

Electors can cast their vote at any voting centre in Victoria on election day, or any early voting centre before election day.

There are also options for eligible voters to vote:

- at a mobile voting centre
- by post
- using the VEC's telephone assisted voting service
- at an overseas and interstate voting location.

Campaigners should be aware of the different types of voting and voting venues before they start canvassing.

5.1 Early voting

We establish early voting centres for electors who wish to vote in person in advance of election day.

Electors can vote before election day at any early voting centre in Victoria. There will be at least 2 early voting centres operating in each district. In all instances, early voting centres will convert to election day voting centres.

Voters do not need to have or give a reason to vote early.

Some districts may have joint early voting centres (JEVCs) if an early voting centre is close to a district boundary.

Details of all early voting centres, including their location, accessibility rating and operating hours will be available on the VEC website using the election venue locator tool. We also send the list to candidates and registered political parties.

5.2 Mobile voting

Mobile voting centres are fixed venues that a mobile voting team attends during the early voting period. This service is to assist voters who may experience barriers to accessing other voting methods. A mobile voting team may move around a venue, issuing early votes to patients and residents, or create a temporary voting area within the venue.

Mobile voting is scheduled to begin on Tuesday 17 November.

Campaigning at mobile voting venues is managed differently to other venues.

Candidates may provide printed copies of registered how-to-vote cards (HTVCs) to election managers to be included in folders carried by mobile voting teams. Mobile voting teams will advise voters that a folder of registered HTVCs is available to be viewed. For more information, see **Chapter 14. How-to-vote cards** and the *Candidate handbook*.

The itinerary for mobile voting activities will be communicated to candidates and registered political parties once finalised.

Low-sensory mobile voting

For the 2026 state election, we are expanding our low-sensory voting model. This initiative aims to provide a more inclusive environment for voters who are, or care for someone who is, neurodivergent or with sensory needs.

Low-sensory voting will be available on Tuesday 17 November, from 10 am to 4 pm.

Carefully selected sites will provide voters the opportunity to vote in a quieter accessible environment, serviced by our mobile voting teams. The aim is to maintain a low-stimulus environment inside and outside the voting centre.

Folders of HTVC and a HTVC QR code poster will be available to voters inside low-sensory mobile voting centres.

We ask campaigners to support the objectives of this service by:

- bringing a chair to sit rather than standing
- avoiding speaking loudly near the voting centre
- staying in one spot outside the voting centre, rather than moving around
- allowing voters to come to you rather than approaching voters.

We appreciate your cooperation and support to make a significant positive difference to the voting experience for people who find noise and crowds stressful.

5.3 Election day voting

Voting takes place between 8 am and 6 pm on election day at voting centres in each district.

Some districts may have joint voting centres (JVCs) if a voting centre is close to a district boundary. Electors from each corresponding district can cast an in-district vote at that JVC.

Details of all election day voting centres will be available via the election venue locator tool on the VEC website. We also send the list to candidates and registered political parties.

6. Campaigning at election venues

6.1 What does campaigning look like?

Campaigners are primarily involved with supporting their candidate, party or interest group by communicating their message.

Before election day, this can be by handing out leaflets or flyers at community events or shopping centres, with a view to informing and persuading undecided voters. Campaigners may also be involved in organising or erecting signage.

During the voting period, many campaigners support their candidate, party or interest group by handing out how-to-vote cards (HTVCs). HTVCs guide voters on how they can direct their voting preferences if they want to support a particular candidate, party, interest group or someone else.

HTVCs may be distributed by campaigners outside voting centres, in line with strict rules. Refer to **Chapter 14. How-to-vote cards for detailed information on HTVC rules and requirements.**

A campaigner might be distributing HTVCs for one day or over multiple days during the voting period. Campaigners may be active right up to the close of voting, at 6 pm on election day.

6.2 Campaigning or scrutineering?

Campaigning stops when no more votes can be cast – at the close of voting.

Once voting has stopped, preparation for counting votes begins immediately.

Counting activities may be observed by scrutineers, who are individuals officially appointed by a candidate to observe specific activities on behalf of that candidate. If you are there to observe the opening of ballot boxes or the counting of votes, you are scrutineering, not campaigning.

A campaigner can become a scrutineer, but they must have an *Appointment and declaration of scrutineer form* signed by their candidate before starting their duties. They must present the signed form and register as a scrutineer at the venue.

Learn more about the transition from campaigner to scrutineer at the close of voting in **Chapter 12. Campaigners who are scrutineering.**

7. VEC-operated venues

For the 2026 state election, we will conduct early and election day voting out of approximately 1,700 venues. It is important for all election participants to understand that voting venues are not VEC owned.

Where possible, we will prioritise securing venues used at previous state and federal elections that were geographically well located within each district. All venues are reviewed in the lead up to the election.

The Act provides the VEC with access to certain venues, such as government school buildings, for use on election day. This is not the case for early voting centres, which must be sourced by the VEC, usually through commercial leases.

It is a challenge to find well-located, accessible and affordable venues available for a short-term lease to operate as early voting venues. We consider many factors when selecting venues, but are often limited by what is available and cannot guarantee venues will have access to all amenities for campaigners to use.

7.1 Election venue locator

Our election venue locator is an interactive tool that lets voters search an address or locality. The map will show the nearest early voting centres, voting centres and election office locations.

- The map will display key details, including:
- the venue name
- address
- opening dates and hours
- accessibility rating.

Campaigners should use the locator to research the sites they are attending and prepare for their activities. The election venue locator will be available on the VEC website, compatible with most mobile phones.

The election venue locator is regularly updated and will often include more details than the lists sent to candidates and registered political parties.

7.2 Accessibility ratings

All election venues are audited for wheelchair accessibility.

The VEC is committed to ensuring that each district has at least one fully accessible voting centre or early voting centre to provide maximum access for voters.

Accessibility ratings for all venues will be available in the election venue locator.

7.3 Campaigner access to amenities

The VEC has a number of priorities when sourcing suitable voting venues and cannot always guarantee that those attending the venues, including campaigners, will have access to shade, shelter, water or toilets.

Early voting centre managers, voting centre managers and election officials will enable access to toilet facilities at voting centres only where possible and practicable, without compromising the integrity of the election. Access may be denied due to proximity to ballot paper secure zones or due to restrictions placed by the building owner.

Campaigners should investigate alternative locations with amenities nearby. Refer to the National Public Toilet map (<https://toiletmap.gov.au>).

See **Chapter 9. Looking after yourself for suggestions on what to bring and how to stay comfortable while campaigning.**

7.4 Consideration of venues

Venues used as voting centres are temporarily operated by the VEC. Like all tenants, we must maintain the condition of the voting venues we use and avoid damage to buildings and grounds. The VEC relies on good stewardship to return to venues at future elections.

All campaigners outside voting centres must:

- comply with any local restrictions requested by venue owners and the VEC regarding the placement of personnel, notices or signs
- ensure that campaigning does not interfere with any other activities at the venue or damage infrastructure
- not damage landscaping, lawns or artificial turf when interacting with voters or placing signs
- ensure workers and materials do not impede or intimidate people moving in and out of the venue or neighbouring properties
- remove all notices or signs (including any fasteners such as ties), how-to-vote cards and any equipment before leaving the venue at the end of each day.

8. Safety while campaigning

Safety for all participants outside voting centres is a priority for the VEC. We proactively manage safety and risk mitigation at the venues we manage and urge campaigners to partner with us in this.

Our venues must be safe environments for all who attend. This means managing hazard reduction, traffic management and also supporting psychological safety. Intimidation, harassment and aggressive behaviour have no place at elections, and may constitute offences against the Act and other laws.

See **Chapter 4. Expected behaviour for recommendations made by campaigners for campaigners.**

8.1 Visitor registration

Visitors to voting centres will be invited to register their emergency contact details with us. This includes those campaigning outside a voting centre. It excludes voters, as well as staff and scrutineers, who register in different ways.

This is an opt-in program and will be available to register via a QR code posted at all venues. Campaigner registrants can log their attendance on multiple days and at different locations.

Registration will assist the VEC to respond should an emergency or incident occur that involves the visitor.

8.2 Campaigner briefing

Campaigners at voting centres will receive a briefing from the voting centre manager or a delegate. These will be held twice daily on each day of voting: as soon as practicable after venues open and at approximately 2:30 pm.

The briefing will cover visitor registration, site safety and access to facilities. It will also outline the canvassing rules and zones in relation to that voting centre and remind campaigners of expected behaviour.

Any campaigners who miss a briefing are encouraged to speak to the voting centre manager.

8.3 Traffic

All visitors to voting centres must be aware of their surroundings. Voting centres can sometimes be in high-traffic areas, within shopping precincts or next to busy roads. Others may have constant movement of cars through their onsite carparks.

Every consideration is given by the VEC to the location, pedestrian-access routes and proximity to traffic at or near voting venues. We will minimise traffic hazards within and around voting centres as much as possible. Where necessary, we may implement traffic management plans as well as administrative controls like signage, exclusion tape or bollards.

8. Safety while campaigning

Campaigners are encouraged to follow the recommendations of voting centre managers and always remain on footpaths and in other car-free zones.

It is everyone's responsibility to be cautious and look out for each other in high-traffic thoroughfares.

8.4 Privacy and wellbeing

Visitors to voting centres are asked not to photograph or film election staff or post their names or images online.

Recent amendments to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) make it a criminal offence to use the internet or a communication service to share any individual's personal information in a threatening or harassing way. This includes names, photographs or other details that could identify election staff or other campaigners. Unauthorised sharing of someone's personal information, commonly known as doxxing, may be reported to law enforcement authorities for further action.

Filming and identifying election staff or other campaigners in the course of their duties causes emotional distress and creates safety risks.

9. Looking after yourself

Campaigning can be hard work. You may be asked by your candidate, party or interest group to attend voting centres for long hours over multiple days during the voting period. That's a lot of time standing outdoors, in all conditions, engaging with many people, including other campaigners.

It's important that you take responsibility for your own comfort, safety and wellbeing during your time at VEC-managed sites. Plan ahead and come prepared.

We recommend campaigners bring their own:

- water
- food
- hat
- sunscreen
- raincoat or umbrella
- suitable clothing and footwear.

If you are concerned about your ability to stand for a long time, consider bringing a folding chair. However, please factor in space at the site, noting it is an offence to obstruct access to a voting centre.

See **7.1 Election venue locator** and **7.3 Campaigner access to amenities** for tools to plan your visit.

9.1 Clothing with political slogans

If you are wearing clothing which displays political images or text, you will be asked to remove, cover or turn the item inside out before entering the voting centre or the canvassing-free zone during the hours of voting.

Consider bringing a covering shirt for this purpose.

10. Conduct near voting centres

The Act sets out conduct within certain distances from the designated entrance of a voting centre during the hours of voting, including:

- Canvassing outside a voting centre within 6 metres
- Exhibiting notices or signs within 100 metres
- Displaying a mobile billboard within 100 metres
- Distributing printed electoral material on election day within 400 metres.

There are penalties for not complying, and election officials and police have powers to respond to alleged offences and other disturbances.

Anyone canvassing near a voting centre needs to be aware of the rules that apply.

This chapter provides detailed information for campaigners on their legislative requirements.

10.1 Designated entrance

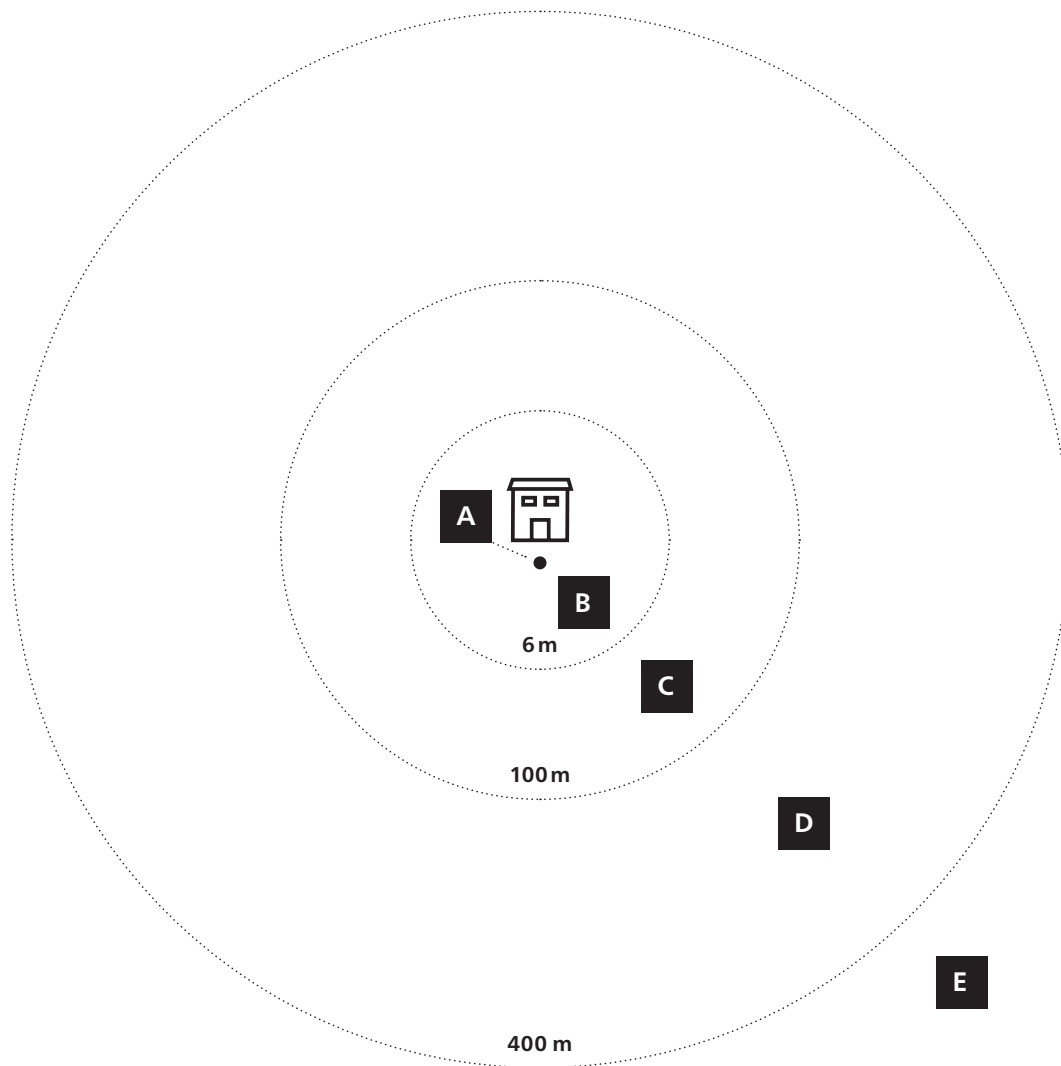
The Act sets out requirements regarding permitted campaigning activity near the designated entrance to a voting centre.

The designated entrance is identified by an official VEC sign displayed at each location during the hours of voting.

It may be the entrance to the building being used for voting, or the entrance into the grounds on which the voting centre is located.

Distances for campaigning rules apply as a radius from the voting centre's designated entrance. A radius is a straight line that extends from a point out to the edge of a circle. The circle makes a zone, and it always includes the entire area within the voting centre or the grounds on which the voting centre is located.

Voting centre staff will be able to provide guidance to you about the distances and zones at a particular voting centre. Note, however, that definitive distances and zones will be determined by the voting centre manager.



A **Designated entrance to a voting centre**

B **Within 6 m:**
No canvassing, exit polling or campaigning may occur within 6 m of a designated entrance to a voting centre.

C **Within 100 m:**
Only a limited number of signs for each candidate and registered political party is allowed between 100 m and 6 m from a designated entrance.

Mobile billboards are not permitted within 100 m of a designated entrance to a voting centre.

D **Beyond 100 m:**
Anyone may display an unlimited number of signs, and the size requirements for signs do not apply.

Within 400 m:
On election day only: Only registered how-to-vote cards can be handed out within 400 m of a voting centre, but not in the 6 m canvassing-free zone.

E **Beyond 400 m:**
Electoral material does not have to be registered, but it must be authorised.

Secondary designated entrance

Sometimes it is necessary to designate a secondary entrance. For example, if there are several main entrances to the grounds in which the voting centre is situated, one of those entrances may also need to be designated.

If a secondary designated entrance is required, it will also be identified by an official designated entrance sign. The canvassing and signage rules that apply to the primary designated entrance will also apply to any secondary designated entrance.

10.2 Canvassing-free zone (6 metre rule)

These rules are defined under section 158 of the Act.

During the hours of voting, within 6 metres of the voting centre's designated entrance, or within the building used as a voting centre (the **canvassing-free zone**) a person must not:

- canvass for votes, including hand out how-to-vote cards
- ask for the vote of any elector
- induce an elector not to vote for a particular candidate
- induce an elector not to vote at the election
- exhibit a notice or sign (other than official VEC signs)
- conduct an exit poll
- if the person is a scrutineer, or is employed or appointed by the VEC, wear any badge, emblem or slogan of a candidate or political party.

Voting centre managers may choose to measure and mark out the 6-metre zone with a chalk line or similar removable method.

Any person distributing how-to-vote cards **must** be outside the canvassing-free zone.

The penalty for non-compliance is 5 penalty units.

Modification of canvassing-free zone

If it is practically necessary for reasons such as poor weather or for safety, an election official can **reduce** the canvassing-free zone to less than 6 metres.

A notice will be posted at the designated entrance stating the new canvassing-free zone that applies to that voting centre and the reason for the reduction from 6 metres. This might apply for the whole voting period at the venue, or just temporarily and be modified again later.

The canvassing-free zone cannot be extended *beyond* 6 metres.

10.3 Limited sign zone (100 metre rule)

Section 158A of the Act provides limits to the number and size of signs that can be displayed within 100 metres of a designated entrance to a voting centre during the hours of voting for that voting centre (the **limited sign zone**).

Campaigners, including for interest groups with no candidates running, must understand what constitutes a sign, who can display them and where they are permitted.

Permitted signs

The only signs that are permitted to be displayed in relation to the election within the limited sign zone during the hours of voting are official signs of the VEC, or signs displayed by a candidate or political party for the election that comply with the following:

- each candidate – whether party-endorsed or independent – may display up to 2 signs within the limited sign zone
- each registered political party may display up to 2 signs within the limited sign zone
- where a registered political party has endorsed 2 or more candidates for a particular Legislative Council region election, these candidates may display no more than 2 signs in total between them within the limited sign zone.
- Candidates can only display notices or signs in a limited sign zone at a voting centre for the district or region for which they have nominated as a candidate.

These allocations mean that a registered political party **may** be entitled to display up to 6 signs at a particular voting centre: 2 for its district candidate, 2 for the party itself and 2 in total for its region candidate(s).

For the purpose of counting signs for a registered political party and its endorsed candidate(s), the shared total cannot be more than 6 signs within 100 metres of the entrance to a voting centre, regardless of what is shown on those signs. The only exception is at a joint voting centre (see **Joint voting centres** later in this chapter).

Note: Interest groups and political action groups cannot display signage in relation to the election in a limited sign zone.

Signage combinations for candidates endorsed by registered political parties

The following diagrams outline the signage entitlements for registered political parties at a voting centre for a single district, based on the candidates they have endorsed.

Size of signs

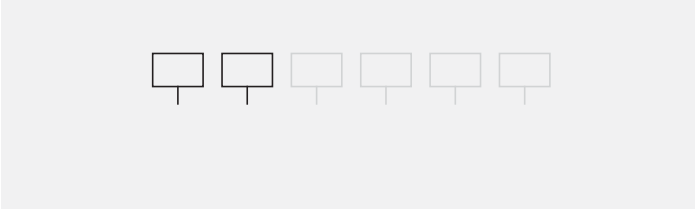
No sign displayed by a party or candidate within the limited sign zone may exceed 600 mm x 900 mm in size. Voting centres will have a tape measure for election staff to check the size of signs.

Up to 6 signs may be displayed, depending on the number of endorsed candidates.

No endorsed candidates

2 signs total

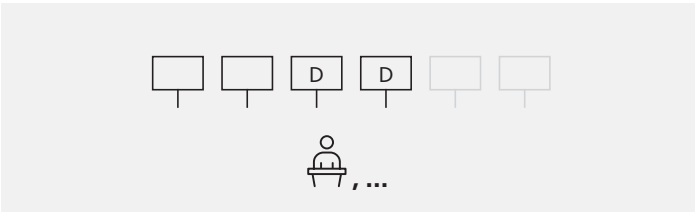
Each registered political party is allocated 2 signs



Only endorsing a *district* candidate (D)

4 signs total

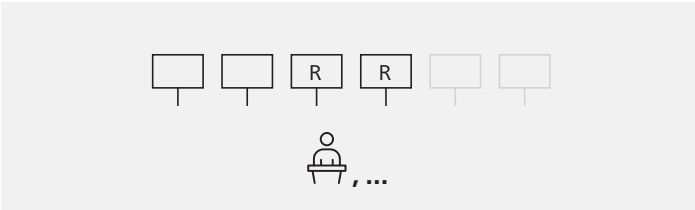
Each district candidate is allocated an additional 2 signs.



Only endorsing *region* candidates (R)

4 signs total

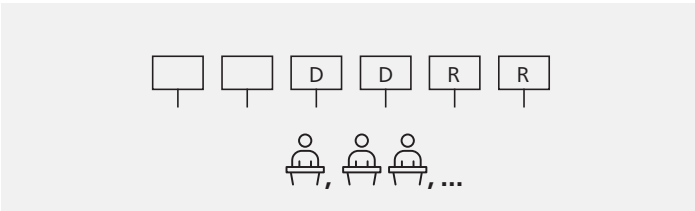
All region candidates endorsed by the same registered political party are allocated an additional 2 signs total between them.



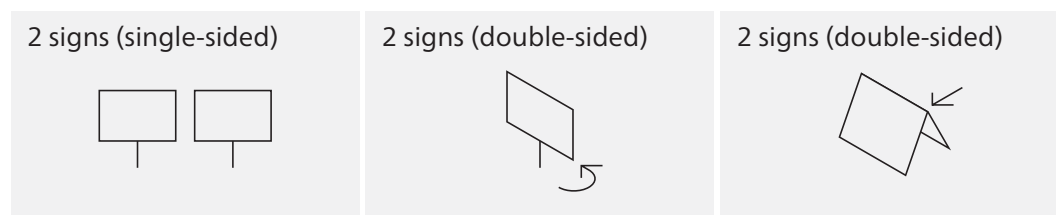
Endorsing *district* and *region* candidates

6 signs total

Registered political party is allocated 2 signs, district candidate is allocated 2 signs and region candidates are allocated 2 signs between them.



What counts as one sign?



For the purposes of counting signs, one sign consists of a single visible side.

Any sign or notice that has 2 visible sides counts as 2 signs. For example, an A-frame or sandwich board counts as 2 signs, or if 2 sides of a notice are visible on a window or fence this counts as 2 signs.

- Flags, balloons, bunting or posters with political logos or electoral matter are signs.
- Signs or notices printed on marquees or other fixtures, or affixed or attached to persons or other structures, are signs.
- Items of clothing worn by pets are not considered to be signs or notices.
- Images or text printed on clothing worn by campaigners or voters are not considered to be signs or notices.

Mobile billboards

Mobile billboards are prohibited within the limited sign zone.

A mobile billboard is any billboard capable of being displayed while being transported or towed by any means, regardless of its size.

This includes:

- billboards attached to vehicles such as bicycles, cars, trucks or drones
- vehicles that are painted or vinyl wrapped
- billboards that can be worn or transported by a person or animal.

A vehicle with any election-related notice or sign larger than 600 mm x 900 mm attached to it is considered a mobile billboard.

It does not include small stickers on vehicles, which are permitted under section 158(4)(a) of the Act.

Signs at joint voting centres

At a joint voting centre (including a joint early voting centre), where one venue is hosting 2 or more neighbouring districts or regions, the signage limits for candidates apply separately for each district and region being hosted:

- If a joint voting centre hosts 2 or more districts, candidates in each district may display up to 2 signs each. This applies even if they are endorsed by the same political party as another candidate displaying signs for another district in that limited sign zone.
- If a joint voting centre hosts 2 or more districts within the same region, region candidates endorsed by the same party may still only display up to 2 signs between them.

10. Conduct near voting centres

- If a joint voting centre hosts 2 or more districts in different elections, the shared allocation of 2 signs for all region candidates endorsed by the same political party applies separately for each region. This means that groups of 2 or more candidates endorsed by the same political party in different regions may display up to 2 signs per group.

The allocation of 2 signs for registered political parties applies for the whole joint voting centre regardless of how many districts are being hosted.

For example, if a joint voting centre hosts 2 districts in 2 different regions, a registered political party may display up to 10 signs:

- 2 signs for an endorsed Legislative Assembly candidate in District A
- 2 signs for an endorsed Legislative Assembly candidate in District B
- 2 signs shared amongst 2 or more endorsed Legislative Council candidates in Region A
- 2 signs shared amongst 2 or more endorsed Legislative Council candidates in Region B
- 2 signs for the registered political party.

Compliance with signage rules

To monitor signage compliance, election officials may need to identify the party or candidate responsible for a sign.

Sometimes signs are not immediately and visually attributable to a particular party. These signs might not include the party's logo or name or refer to an endorsed candidate. As long as they are appropriately authorised and within the relevant candidate or party's signage limits, they are compliant with the Act.

Voting centre staff may need to ask campaigners outside the voting centre who is responsible for signs which have been exhibited. Voting centre managers may seek clarification from other VEC staff if they are unsure about how to determine a particular sign's allocation.

The VEC may also contact designated signage contacts which were provided as part of the nomination process. They may photograph signs to help with these enquiries.

It is up to parties and candidates to decide the contents of signs permitted to be displayed within their overall allocation. The contents of signs displayed by a party and its endorsed candidates do not need to align to a particular allocation category and may be considered within their total allocation of permitted signs. For example, all signs displayed by a party may promote endorsed candidates – this would not contravene the limits of 2 signs per candidate or group.

Removal of signs

During the hours of voting, an election manager or election official has the power to remove or cover a notice or sign if it doesn't comply with the requirements for the limited sign zone.

If the sign is displayed by a political party or candidate permitted to display signs in the limited sign zone, the election manager will first attempt to contact the candidate signage contact provided and ask them to remove it.

An election official may also remove or cover a sign if they can't determine which candidate, party or group the sign or notice belongs to.

Campaign offices and electorate offices

Where a campaign office, electorate office or other location operated by a candidate or party is located within 100 metres of the designated entrance of a voting centre (including an early voting centre, mobile voting centre, or election day voting centre), the signage requirements apply during the hours of voting.

This means that any signs displayed at the location count towards a party's or candidate's allocated number of signs and no sign may exceed 600 mm x 900 mm.

Permanent or pre-existing signs

If a permanent or preexisting notice or sign for a candidate or registered political party or relating to the election is located within the limited sign zone, it is subject to the limited sign zone rules. If displayed by a candidate or registered political party, it is counted towards the allocation, and if displayed by an interest group or someone else it is not permitted to be displayed. The person responsible for the sign may choose to cover the sign rather than causing it to be removed.

Signs at private residences

Signs displayed at private residences are **not subject** to the rules regarding signs within 100 metres of a designated entrance.

Private residences include buildings, grounds and any perimeter fencing that belongs to a private residence within the 100 metre zone. This includes premises used as a private residence, including above a commercial property which may be the designated entrance of a voting centre.

10.4 Distribution of electoral material (400 metre rule)

The only electoral material that may be distributed or made available during the hours of voting within 400 metres of a voting centre on election day are **registered how-to-vote cards**. The canvassing-free zone means that registered how-to-vote cards may not be distributed within 6 metres of the voting centre's designated entrance.

This is set out in section 156 of the Act.

A penalty of 60 penalty units applies.

How-to-vote cards distributed outside early voting centres do not need to be registered as this rule applies on election day only, but any unregistered how-to-vote cards must not purport to be registered how-to-vote cards. See **14.1 Distribution of how-to-vote cards** for more information.

An election manager, voting centre manager or election official may request a person reasonably suspected of contravening these rules to show them any how-to-vote cards in their possession and/or hand them all over. Anyone who fails to comply with this request is guilty of an offence.

This is set out in section 157(1) and (2) of the Act.

A penalty of 10 penalty units applies.

10.5 Enforcement powers

Section 174 of the Act outlines the enforcement powers of election managers and election officials to maintain order and keep the peace at voting centres. An election manager or election official has the power and authority to request the removal of any person who:

- obstructs the approaches (pathways and entrances) to a voting centre
- wilfully or unnecessarily obstructs or delays the proceedings at a voting centre
- behaves in a disorderly manner
- remains in a voting centre for a longer time than is reasonably necessary for the purpose of voting
- causes a disturbance at any election.

Election managers and election officials will request cooperation from the person in the first instance, but if unsuccessful, the VEC will escalate the matter to the relevant party or candidate contact to resolve. If necessary, the election manager, election official or field compliance officer will request police to assist them in maintaining order.

Learn more about escalation pathways in **Chapter 15. Escalation processes at voting centres**.

11. At the voting centre

As a campaigner, you are an advocate for your candidate, party or interest group.

During the voting period, most campaigners are engaged in distributing how-to-vote cards at voting centres. This section explains some campaigning basics, including how to manage and pack up materials responsibly.

11.1 Voters from all districts

Most voters attending a voting centre will be enrolled voters from within that district.

But campaigners should be aware of the likelihood of encountering voters from out of district. For those voters, the HTVC you are distributing may not reflect the electorate they belong to. Voters from other districts can access registered HTVCs relevant to their enrolled electorate via the VEC website.

11.2 Engaging respectfully

Campaigners should engage respectfully with voters, candidates and other campaigners.

Please keep in mind that some voters may find it difficult or stressful being in a busy, high-pressure or loud environment. Others may have had a negative experience of voting in Australia or overseas.

Not everyone welcomes an oncoming stranger, so pay attention to an elector's body language, and listen to what they say. If you are asked to back off, please do so.

Voters do not have to accept a HTVC. Whether an elector accepts or follows a HTVC is their choice.

See **Chapter 4. Expected behaviour** for more information.

11.3 At end of each day

At the end of each day during early voting, campaigners must pack up and remove all signs, HTVC and equipment.

Seek advice from the early voting centre manager about possible overnight storage options.

Note: Storage of campaigner materials is not always feasible at early voting centres, and you may need to take materials home with you.

11.4 At close of voting

On the last day of voting at any voting centre, candidates and campaigners are responsible for removing all their electoral signage, including:

- bunting and banners
- corflutes
- stakes, tape and ties.

All items should be removed carefully and taken away. Check and remove signage from fencing.

Boxes or loose quantities of HTVC must be gathered and taken away. Rubbish must be correctly disposed of.

Notify the voting centre manager if additional bins or other resources are required, or if there is a hazard that needs rectifying.

12. Campaigners who are scrutineering

Campaigners may be appointed by candidates to act as scrutineers during an election. It is important that campaigners understand the difference between the two roles.

Scrutineers represent candidates' interests at elections and ensure the integrity of the election process for activities where candidates are not permitted to attend. Scrutineers may observe ballot paper processes, often focused on counting activities.

While you do not need to be appointed to be a campaigner outside a voting centre, scrutineers must be formally appointed. Scrutineers must present an *Appointment and declaration of scrutineer* form signed by the candidate they are representing. If you are campaigning and will later be scrutineering, you must bring the signed form with you. The appointment and declaration form is available on the VEC website and in the *Candidate kit*.

12.1 Be ready to scrutineer

Campaigners who will be scrutineering at a voting centre are advised to inform the voting centre manager or other election official before the close of voting that they will be attending as a scrutineer. You will need to be registered as a scrutineer and inside the voting centre in time for the commencement of counting.

Campaigners who will be scrutineering should be keenly aware of the timing of activities at the venue after close of voting. Clarify details with the voting centre manager such as access and location.

Scrutineers should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to an activity start time to allow time to register, receive a briefing and be ready to observe from the commencement of the activity.

For detailed information on the rights, responsibilities and specific activities associated with scrutineering at an election refer to the *Scrutineer handbook*.

13. Electoral material and authorisation

Electoral material must always be authorised to ensure members of the public are aware of the origins of the material. Authorisation ensures transparency and allows someone to decide for themselves how much they value or trust electoral material. Voters have the right to see electoral material that is authorised and not misleading or deceptive.

The person or group printing, publishing or distributing the electoral material should include the relevant authorisation on the material.

Authorisation requirements apply to everyone who produces electoral material – not just registered political parties, members of Parliament or candidates. Electoral material produced by interest groups must also be authorised.

There is a penalty for failing to authorise electoral material.

Section 83 of the Act sets out the requirements for authorisation.

13.1 What is electoral material?

Electoral material includes paid advertisements and printed material containing 'electoral matter'.

Material produced by some entities, such as registered political parties, members of Parliament, candidates and some interest groups is electoral material even if the material is not paid for or printed if they are electoral in nature.

13.2 Authorisation requirements

All printed electoral material needs to display an 'authorisation statement'. That means it must display, somewhere visible on the material, the full or registered name and address of the person who authorised the material. This person can be a natural person, body politic or a body corporate (e.g. a registered political party, company or organisation).

For example:

John Citizen, 1 Democracy Way, Melbourne, Victoria.

Democracy Matters Party, 20 Election St, Melbourne, Victoria

The requirement for printer details to appear on printed electoral material applies only to HTVC. For how-to-vote cards (both registered and unregistered, and both printed and electronic), the authorisation statement must also include the printer's name and place of business. For example:

Authorised and printed by John Citizen, 1 Democracy Way, Melbourne, Victoria.

Authorised by Democracy Matters Party, 20 Election St, Melbourne, Victoria.

Printed by Snap Print, 28 Voters St, Melbourne, Victoria.

Refer to the *Candidate handbook* for detailed information about authorisation requirements.

❗ Important: All HTVC must include an authorisation statement.

14. How-to-vote cards

This chapter outlines the different rules governing how-to-vote cards (HTVCs) at early voting centres, mobile voting centres and election day voting centres.

It also explains which HTVCs need to be registered and what a registration endorsement looks like.

A HTVC is any card, handbill, pamphlet or notice that:

- includes a representation of a ballot paper, including partial or purported partial representations of a ballot paper
- or
- lists the names of any or all the candidates for an election with a number indicating an order of voting preference against the names of any or all those candidates.

14.1 Distribution of how-to-vote cards

There are different requirements for distributing HTVCs depending on where and when they are being distributed.

HTVCs for distribution at early voting centres do not have to be registered

HTVCs provided to mobile voting teams must be **registered** with the VEC

HTVCs to be distributed within 400 metres of voting centres on election day must be **registered** with the VEC.

HTVCs at early voting centres

HTVCs distributed at early voting centres do not need to be registered. However, they must contain the name and street address of the person authorising the card and the name and place of business of the printer.

The penalty for failing to authorise electoral material is 10 penalty units for an individual and 50 penalty units for a corporation.

HTVCs that are not registered must not contain the endorsement 'Registered by the Victorian Electoral Commission'.

HTVCs at mobile voting centres

HTVCs supplied to the election manager to be carried by mobile voting teams must be registered.

When supplied, the election manager will enclose the registered HTVCs in folders for the mobile voting teams in the same order as candidates or group names appear on the ballot paper. Mobile voting teams will advise voters that a folder of registered HTVCs is available to be viewed.

14. How-to-vote cards

Low-sensory mobile voting centres will also have a poster with a QR code that directs electors to registered HTVCs published on the VEC website.

If you attend a mobile voting centre to distribute HTVCs, this cannot be within 6 metres of the designated entrance or within the mobile voting centre itself.

While scrutineers may be appointed to attend mobile voting, they must not display election material or distribute HTVCs while accompanying the mobile team.

HTVCs at election day voting centres

HTVCs distributed at election day voting centres must be registered.

Registered HTVCs are the only form of printed electoral material that can be distributed within 400 metres of a voting centre on election day.

A penalty of 60 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment applies.

This restriction does not apply to posters, bunting and similar material that are attached to a structure or vehicle, material in campaign offices, or the normal distribution of newspapers.

On election day an election manager or election official can ask a person they reasonably suspect to be distributing unregistered HTVCs to produce their HTVCs for inspection and hand over all unregistered cards.

Failure to comply with this request is an offence that attracts a penalty of 10 penalty units.

Refer to **Chapter 16. Electoral offences** for more information.

14.2 Registered how-to-vote-cards

How-to-vote cards that require registration must be lodged and approved as registered before printing.

Only the VEC can register a HTVC.

Any person, including independent candidates and interest groups, may lodge an HTVC for registration. This must be lodged with the election manager for the electorate the card relates to.

Registered political parties must lodge HTVCs with the VEC's head office for registration.

The HTVC registration period opens Tuesday 10 November and closes 12 noon on Friday 20 November.

In order to be registered, HTVCs must contain an 'authorisation statement' as follows:

Authorised by [name and street address of authoriser, not a PO Box]

Printed by [name and place of business]

A registered HTVC **must** also include the following endorsement in the footer of at least one printed side of the card:

Registered by the Victorian Electoral Commission

HTVCs must not be distributed with the endorsement if they have not yet been registered by the VEC.

See also **13.2 Authorisation requirements**. Refer to the *Candidate handbook* for information on the HTVC registration process.

14.3 Types of registered how-to-vote cards

Single HTVC

A single HTVC is one that relates to only one electoral district or region. Any person or group may submit a single HTVC, including candidates, registered political parties, interest groups and individuals.

Combined HTVC

Registered political parties may submit a combined HTVC for registration. A combined HTVC is submitted for one or more electoral districts or regions for which the registered political party has endorsed a candidate.

Multiple HTVC

Registered political parties may submit a multiple HTVC for registration. A multiple HTVC is submitted for no less than every electoral district and/or region for which the registered political party has endorsed a candidate.

15. Escalation processes at voting centres

This chapter explains reporting pathways for campaigners to raise concerns or issues during campaigning.

It also outlines what actions we take when a complaint is made about campaigner behaviour or compliance.

If you have an issue or complaint to make while campaigning, raise it directly with the voting centre manager. If a matter cannot be resolved or an answer found, the voting centre manager will seek advice from other VEC staff.

Campaigners can also report concerns or issues with the candidate or party they are representing. Find out your candidate or group's recommended steps for issues management before campaigning begins.

❗ Important: The VEC is not in a position to regulate candidate or campaigner behaviour outside of the scope of the Act.

15.1 Resolving disagreements

If a complaint is made at a voting centre about poor campaigner behaviour, the voting centre manager will talk directly to the campaigner to try to resolve the matter in an amicable and constructive manner first. If necessary, the manager will take the opportunity to remind all campaigners present of their obligations.

Most disagreements outside voting centres can be resolved peacefully.

Voting centre managers will assist to resolve any operational frustrations causing the behaviour and seek advice from other VEC staff as necessary.

15.2 Escalation

If an election manager is notified of an issue at a voting centre, they may need to escalate the matter further to the VEC's head office.

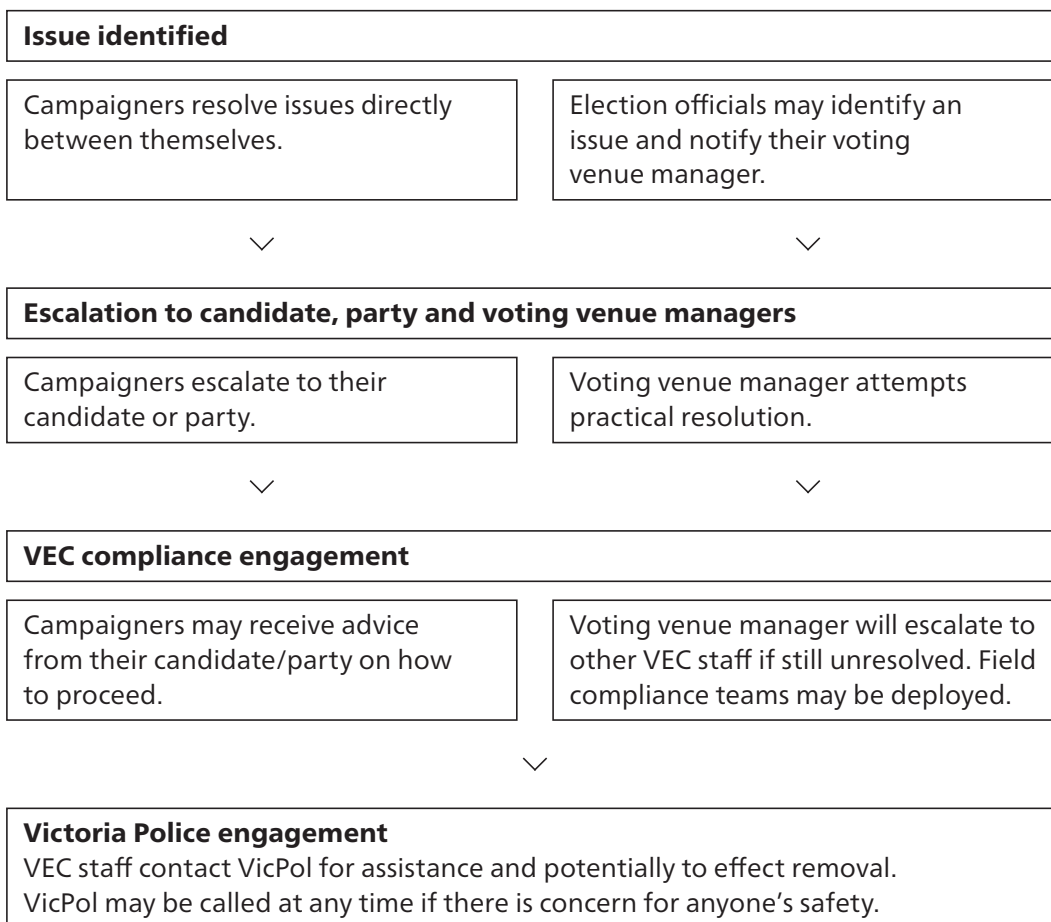
An election manager may speak to a candidate about authorisation, signage or other matters if it is impacting voting or in breach of the rules.

If campaigner behaviour is causing a disturbance and may be disruptive to the election process, either inside or outside the voting centre, election staff will attempt to resolve the matter first.

If a serious matter is brought to the attention of the election manager, it is likely other VEC staff will be asked to visit the site and assist. Depending on the issue, further advice will be sought from head office. The election manager may also deploy a field compliance officer to the site to assist with serious incidents.

If all constructive compliance responses fail, or there is a serious criminal matter such as risk of harm to any person, police may be called to intervene.

See **Chapter 17. Feedback and complaints** for information on how to make a formal complaint.



'Escalation pathways at voting centres'

16. Electoral offences

This chapter lists the electoral offences most relevant to campaigners. It describes the offences that exist for state elections as well as activities that occur after the election.

The following list of offences is not exhaustive and should not be taken as legal advice. We encourage you to seek independent legal advice if you are concerned about any of these offences.

Refer to the Act for more information.

16.1 Offences for electoral material

Failing to authorise electoral material and how-to-vote cards

It is an offence to print, publish or distribute electoral material (or to cause, permit or authorise this) unless the name and address of the person who authorised the electoral material appears. This is set out in section 83(1) of the Act.

It is also an offence to print, publish or distribute a how-to-vote card (or to cause, permit or authorise this), including via the internet, unless it contains the name and address of the person who authorised it and the name and place of business of the printer or publisher. This is set out in section 83A(1) of the Act.

For both offences, the maximum penalty is 10 penalty units for a person and 50 penalty units for a corporation.

For more information, including what is considered electoral material, see **Chapter 13. Electoral material and authorisation.**

Producing misleading or deceptive material

Between the issue of the writs and 6 pm on election day, it is an offence to print, publish or distribute any matter or thing that is likely to mislead or deceive an elector in relation to the casting of their vote (or to cause, permit or authorise this). This is set out in section 84(1) of the Act.

During the same time period, it is also an offence to print, publish or distribute any electoral advertisement, handbill, pamphlet or notice that contains an image or representation of a ballot paper for the election which is likely to induce an elector to mark their vote otherwise than in accordance with the directions on the ballot paper (or to cause, permit or authorise this).

For both offences, the maximum penalty is 60 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment for a natural person or 300 penalty units for a body corporate.

16.2 Offences during election activities

Bribery

It is an indictable offence to ask for, receive or obtain (or offer or agree to do these things) a property or benefit of any kind from someone on an understanding that the person's election conduct will be influenced or affected. This is set out in section 151(1) of the Act.

Conversely, it is an indictable offence to give, or promise or offer to give, a property or benefit of any kind to someone in order to influence or affect that person or anyone's election conduct. This is set out in section 151(2) of the Act.

For the purposes of these offences, 'election conduct' means:

- the way someone votes at an election
- someone's nomination as a candidate for an election
- someone's support or opposition of a candidate or political party at an election
- any act or thing someone does which is intended or likely to influence the way an elector sets out their preferences when voting.

'Election conduct' does not include a declaration of public policy or a promise of public action for the purposes of these offences.

For both offences, the maximum penalty is 600 penalty units or 5 years imprisonment.

Interfering with political liberty

It is an indictable offence to hinder or interfere with the free exercise or performance of someone's political right or duty relevant to an election. This is set out in section 152(1) of the Act.

It is also an indictable offence to influence someone's vote at an election by violence or intimidation. This is set out in section 152(2) of the Act.

For both offences, the maximum penalty is 600 penalty units or 5 years imprisonment.

Distributing an unregistered how-to-vote card which purports to be registered

It is an offence to print, publish, or distribute a how-to-vote card which has not been registered and which contains the prescribed endorsement 'Registered by the Victorian Electoral Commission' or a purported prescribed endorsement (or to cause, permit or authorise this). This is set out in section 156(2) of the Act.

This includes distributing a how-to-vote card containing the prescribed endorsement at early voting centres before the how-to-vote card has been successfully registered. For more information, see **4.1 Distributing how-to-vote cards**.

The maximum penalty is 60 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment.

16.3 Offences at a voting centre

Subjecting a campaigner to violence or intimidation

It is an indictable offence to subject any person handing out how-to-vote cards or supporting a candidate within 100 metres of the entrance of a voting centre to violence or intimidation. This is set out in section 152(4) of the Act.

The maximum penalty is 600 penalty units or 5 years imprisonment.

Canvassing or other prohibited conduct near a voting centre

During the hours of voting within 6 metres of the entrance of, or within, a voting centre, it is an offence to:

- canvass for votes
- solicit the vote of any elector
- induce any elector not to vote for any particular candidate
- induce any elector not to vote at the election
- exhibit any notice or sign (other than an official notice) relating to the election. This does not apply to car stickers, items of clothing when worn, lapel buttons, lapel badges, fridge magnets, pens or pencils
- conduct an exit poll
- if the person is a scrutineer or a VEC staff member, wear any badge, emblem or political slogan of a candidate or political party.

This is set out in section 158 of the Act.

The maximum penalty is 5 penalty units.

If the VEC considers it necessary, we may specify a distance less than 6 metres from the entrance of a particular voting centre within which this offence applies at that voting centre. This may be necessary due to weather conditions, traffic management, safety concerns or for another reason.

Election managers and election officials have the power to remove a notice or sign which is not permitted to be displayed under section 158 of the Act.

For more information, see **Chapter 10. Conduct near voting centres.**

Exhibiting a notice or sign near a voting centre

Within 100 metres of the designated entrance of a voting centre (known as the 'limited sign zone'), it is an offence to exhibit any notice or sign in relation to the election except as permitted under section 158A of the Act:

- each candidate – whether party-endorsed or independent – may display up to 2 signs within the limited sign zone
- each registered political party may display up to 2 signs within the limited sign zone
- where a registered political party has endorsed 2 or more candidates for a particular Legislative Council region election, these candidates may display up to no more than 2 signs in total between them within the limited sign zone.

This does not apply to car stickers, items of clothing when worn, lapel buttons, lapel badges, fridge magnets, pens or pencils.

All signs and notices within the limited sign zone must not be larger than 600 mm by 900 mm in size.

These rules do not apply to official notices or signs, such as those displayed by the VEC, or to signs that do not relate to the election.

The maximum penalty is 5 penalty units.

Displaying a mobile billboard near a voting centre

It is an offence to display a mobile billboard within the limited sign zone. This is set out in section 158A(3C) of the Act.

A mobile billboard is any billboard capable of being displayed while being transported or towed by any means, regardless of its size. This includes billboards that can be worn or transported by a person or animal, and billboards attached to vehicles such as cars, trucks, motorcycles, mopeds, drones, bicycles and scooters, and on trailers towed by vehicles.

Vehicles that are painted or vinyl wrapped with election-related content are considered mobile billboards. A vehicle with any election-related notice or sign attached to it is considered a mobile billboard.

The maximum penalty is 5 penalty units.

Using a public address system

During the hours of voting within 400 metres of the entrance of, or within, a voting centre it is an offence to:

- use or permit the use of any loudspeaker, public address system, amplifier, broadcasting van, sound system, radio apparatus or any other apparatus or device to broadcast or disseminate anything intended or likely to affect the result of the election
- make any public demonstration about the election.

This is set out in section 159 of the Act.

The maximum penalty is one penalty unit.

16.4 Offences which only apply on election day

Disseminating exit poll results

During the hours of voting, it is an offence to publicly disseminate the results of an exit poll carried out at an election day voting centre (or to cause, permit or authorise this). This is set out in section 155 of the Act.

The maximum penalty is 60 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment.

Distributing printed electoral material other than a registered how-to-vote card near a voting centre

Within 400 metres of the entrance of, or within, a voting centre during the hours of voting on election day, it is an offence to distribute printed electoral material other than a registered how-to-vote card. This is set out in section 156(1) of the Act.

The maximum penalty is 60 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment.

17. Feedback and complaints

Complaint management is an important component of conducting an election. We have systems in place to manage them.

All electoral participants should be aware of the difference between raising an issue and making a formal complaint.

17.1 Raising an issue or complaint

In most circumstances, where the issue, complaint or concern is minor, campaigners should direct the matter, in real time, to the voting centre manager. They will seek to resolve the issue in the first instance. They may then contact the election manager for further advice or confirmation on how to proceed.

See **Chapter 15. Escalation processes at voting centres** for more information.

If an issue cannot be resolved, or if a complaint is about a possible breach of the Act, the complaint must be put in writing as a formal complaint.

17.2 Making a formal complaint

Feedback and complaints must be submitted in writing, either through the online submission form or by email or post.

The VEC also provides accessible options to assist customers to capture their complaint, including over the phone or via an interpreting service. Easy English guides are available to assist customers to make their submission.

Online

vec.vic.gov.au/about-us/complaints

Email

complaints@vec.vic.gov.au

Post

Customer Feedback and Complaints
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

17.3 Feedback and complaint processing

Any feedback or complaint made in writing will be reviewed by the VEC.

If the feedback or complaint:

- relates to the administration of the election, including the actions and behaviour of election managers or election staff, it will be referred to the relevant VEC team for investigation and response
- alleges an offence against the Act and provides appropriate evidence, it will be referred for investigation (for information on selected offences covered under the Act, see **Chapter 16. Electoral offences**)
- alleges a breach of local laws, the complaint will be directed to the Chief Executive Officer of the relevant local council
- alleges a criminal offence under other legislation, the complaint will be directed to Victoria Police or the appropriate regulator.

You can also raise a complaint directly with a local council or Victoria Police.

If we need to refer your matter externally, we will advise you that the matter has been referred. In some cases, it may also be appropriate for us to notify the subject of the feedback or complaint that a matter has been raised, particularly where further information is necessary.

The VEC will not discuss individual complaints with members of the media under any circumstances, not even to confirm or deny that a complaint has been received. In certain circumstances, like when it's necessary for the VEC's investigation of a matter, limited statements may be made in respect to emerging or ongoing complaints.

Existing complainants may enquire about the progress of their complaint by contacting the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team on 131 832 or (03) 8620 1100.

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