VEC annual return user guide

Registered political parties





Acknowledgement of Country

We pay respect to Victoria's traditional owners and their elders past and present who have been custodians of this country for many thousands of years. We acknowledge their living culture and their role in the life of Victoria.

Disclaimer

The information in this user guide is specific to Victorian funding and disclosure laws and does not consider the laws of other Australian jurisdictions. Victoria's funding and disclosure laws are set out in the *Electoral Act 2002* (Electoral Act).

This information is general in nature and does not consider your individual circumstances. If you are unsure about how the laws apply to you, seek professional advice.

Contact us

The Funding, Disclosure and Parties team is here to support you with your funding and disclosure obligations. Please get in touch with us if you have questions or concerns.

Phone: 03 8620 1100 or 131 832

Email: disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au

You can also contact us at repregistration@vec.vic.gov.au with any questions about registered political parties and their agents.

Version control

Version	Date Effective	Approved by	Amendment
1.0	11/10/2019	Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation	N/A
1.1	30/06/2020	Program Manager, Funding and Disclosure	Financial year values; system enhancements
1.2	30/06/2021	Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation	Financial year values; system enhancements
2.0	25/08/2022	Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation	Updated to reflect system enhancements

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Definitions

For an explanation of terms used in this user guide, please visit the <u>Funding glossary</u> on our website.

More information

Please visit our <u>website</u> for more information on funding and disclosure obligations, or to view the following user guides:

- Political donations | Victorian Electoral Commission (vec.vic.gov.au)
- Annual returns | Victorian Electoral Commission (vec.vic.gov.au)
- <u>VEC Disclosures Portal quide</u>
- VEC Disclosures Associated entities and third-party campaigners functions guide
- <u>VEC Disclosures Registered political party functions guide</u>

Annual return for registered political parties

General information

This guide is to help you, as a registered officer, complete an annual return for your registered political party using <u>VEC Disclosures</u>. This is required under Part 12 of the *Electoral Act 2002*.

The reporting period for the annual return is from 1 July to 30 June.

VEC Disclosures

This guide explains how to complete an annual return using VEC Disclosures.

<u>VEC Disclosures</u> is our purpose-built portal that allows users to disclose political donations and submit required annual returns. Political donations are money, services (including paid labour), loans, guarantees or property (including a loan of assets).

Web browser capability

<u>VEC Disclosures</u> works on multiple web browsers. You can access <u>VEC Disclosures</u> on a mobile device, however, the best user experience is on your desktop or laptop computer.

Entity details

It is your responsibility to make sure your entity details are correct. To update your details click 'manage entity' on your dashboard.

Audit requirements

You must submit the following mandatory documents with your annual return:

1. An audit certificate from a registered company auditor within the meaning of the Corporations Act 2001 of the Commonwealth.

As outlined in section 209(3) of the Electoral Act, the audit certificate must state the auditor:

- a. was given full and free access, at all reasonable times, to all accounts, records, documents and papers relating directly or indirectly to any matter required to be specified in the statement
- b. examined the material referred to in paragraph (a) for the purpose of giving the certificate
- c. received all information and explanations that the auditor requested in respect of any matter required to be specified in the statement
- d. has no reason to believe that any matter stated in the statement is not correct.

Download the VEC audit certificate template.

Due date

The financial year annual return can be submitted from 1 July each year and is due by 11.59pm 20 October. You must submit your return using <u>VEC Disclosures</u> each year.

We are required to publish annual returns on <u>VEC Disclosures</u> by 31 December each year.

Offences

Offences include (but are not limited to):

- failing to submit on time (200 penalty units)
- providing false or misleading information (300 penalty units and/or 2 years imprisonment).

A full list of fees and penalties can be found on the Department of Treasury and Finance website: <u>Indexation of fees and penalties | Department of Treasury and Finance Victoria (dtf.vic.gov.au)</u>

More information

For more information about annual returns and your legislative obligations, refer to <u>our website</u> or <u>Determination No. 2 of 2019</u> under the Electoral Act.

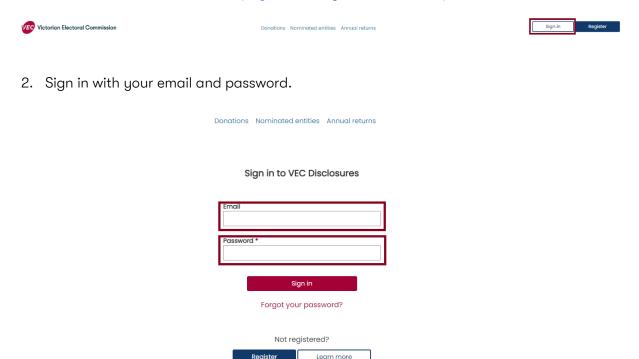
Annual return process

Annual returns can be completed over more than one session in <u>VEC Disclosures</u>. The portal allows you to save your progress and return to complete it later.

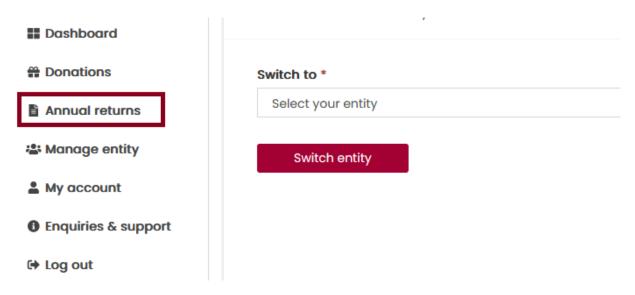
Make sure you click 'Save and continue' if you wish to exit and return later. For more information, see <u>Edit and submit an annual return in another session</u> in this guide.

Lodge an annual return

1. On the <u>VEC Disclosures home page</u>, click 'Sign in' from the top menu.



3. From the dashboard, click 'Annual returns' from the left-hand menu.



4. Click 'Lodge annual return'. Each political party can have **one** active annual return per financial year only.



Enter key information

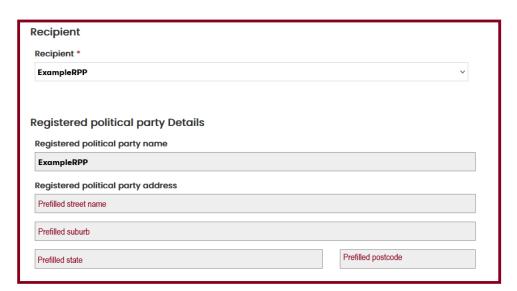
1. Make sure you read and understand the key information.



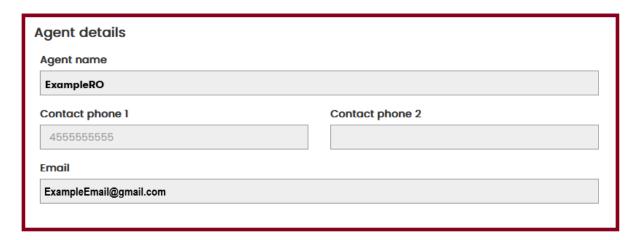
Note: Financial year details are for the current financial reporting period only and cannot be edited.



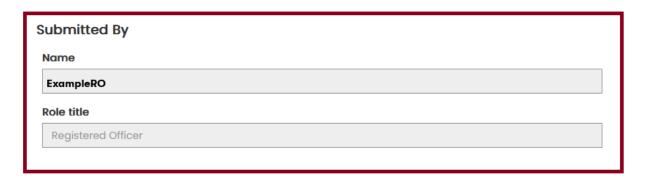
- 2. Select the registered political party from the dropdown menu.
- The party details will auto-populate.



• The 'registered officer' section will also auto-populate.



- If any of the party or officer details are incorrect please refer to the <u>VEC Disclosures portal guide</u> sections Edit user details all users/Edit organisation entity details for instructions on how to update these.
- The submitted-by details will auto-populate with your details, as the user currently logged in. These details cannot be edited.



3. Click 'Save and continue' to move to the next screen.



Enter income for financial year

• The 'Total income (inc. GST)' field will auto-populate for this financial year. This figure is the total amount received by or on behalf of your political party for this financial year. You cannot edit this field – it is automatically calculated based on the data you enter in the later fields.

Total income (inc. GST) * This amount is automatically populated as a summation of your Total Disclosed Political Donations, Total Undisclosed Political Donations and Total Amounts Received Other Than Political Donations. You cannot directly edit this amount. \$

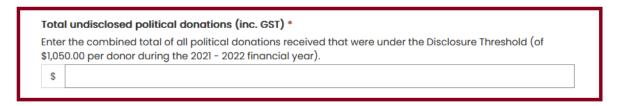
The 'Total disclosed political donations (inc. GST)' field will auto-populate for the
financial year specified and cannot be edited. This figure is the total of all political
donations your party received in this financial year that have been disclosed in <u>VEC</u>
Disclosures.



Note: this figure will also appear as a line item in <u>Table 1 – disclosed political donations</u> at the bottom of the screen.

1. Enter the 'Total undisclosed political donations (inc. GST)' received for the financial year specified. Wherever you can enter a value, you must include a number even if it is zero.

This will include any donations received by the party that were under the \$1,050 disclosure threshold that were not previously disclosed in <u>VEC Disclosures</u>.



2. Enter the total 'Number of donors for undisclosed political donations' that have contributed for the financial year.

This is the number of donors who made donations under the \$1,050 disclosure threshold. Some donors may have made more than one donation, but you only need to count them once.

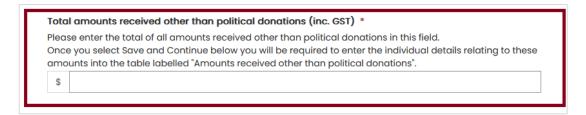


3. Enter the 'Total amounts received other than political donations (inc. GST)' for the specified financial year.

This means any amount received by or on behalf of the party/associated entity that did not require disclosure during the financial year. Examples include VEC funding, JobKeeper, and dividends on shares.

4. Click 'Save and continue'. You will be prompted to provide details of each amount exceeding the disclosure threshold (including in aggregate) received from a single person or entity during the previous financial year. If one person or entity has donated 2 or more amounts, you can consolidate these into one line.

Note: this field was previously called 'non-political donations'.



More detail of this income must be added in <u>Table 3 – Amounts received other than political</u> donations.

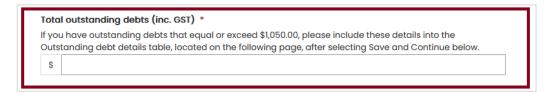
Enter expenses for financial year

1. Enter the 'Total expenditure (inc. GST)' incurred by, or on behalf of (i.e. VEC public funding), your party for the financial year specified.



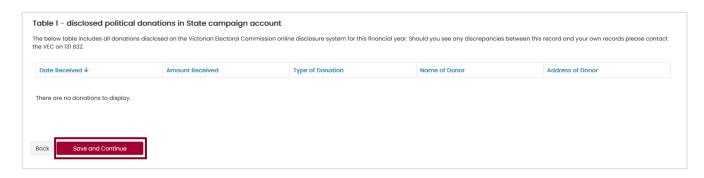
2. Enter the 'Total outstanding debts (inc. GST)' incurred by, or on behalf of (i.e. ATO) your party as at the end of the financial year specified.

Note: You will need to add further details of these debts in Table 2 - Outstanding debt details.



Complete Table 1 – Disclosed political donations

- 1. Review the pre-populated 'Table 1 Disclosed political donations'. These are all the donations that have been disclosed in <u>VEC Disclosures</u> for the financial year.
 - If the table is accurate, click 'Save and continue'. This will save a draft version of the annual return.
 - If there are any discrepancies between the table and your own records, email <u>disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au</u>.

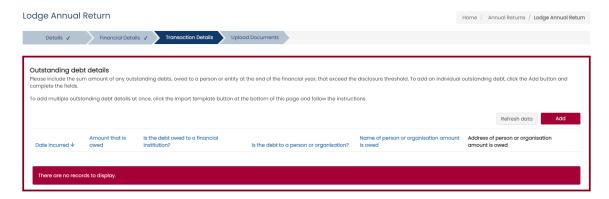


Enter transaction details – manual input

Outstanding debt details and amounts received other than political donations may be entered individually or via a <u>bulk</u> import.

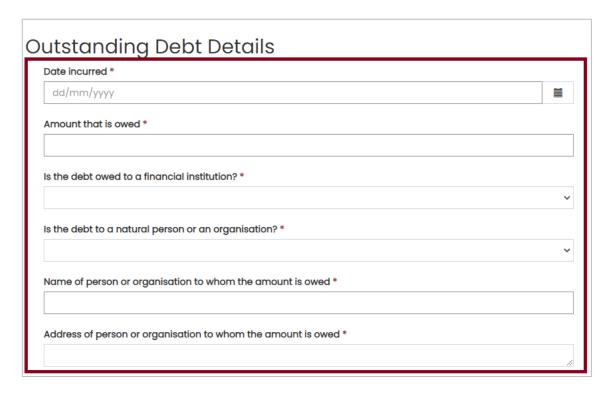
Complete Table 2 – Outstanding debt details

1. Click 'Add' to populate the 'Outstanding debt details' table with any debts owed to a person or entity at the end of the financial year that exceed the disclosure threshold.



- 2. Complete all fields in the 'Outstanding debt details' form.
- 3. Click 'Submit' and repeat step 2 to add any further line entries.

Note: You can navigate away or log out of <u>VEC Disclosures</u> and come back to it later.





Submit

4. To edit or delete any 'Outstanding debt details' line entries, click 'Action' next to the relevant entry, then select 'Edit' or 'Delete'.



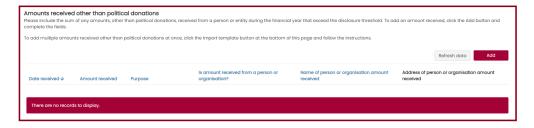
5. When the details match your records click 'Save and continue'. This will save a draft of your annual return.



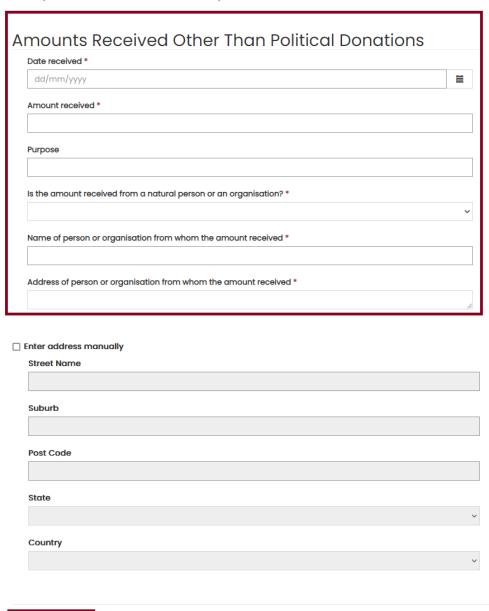
Complete Table 3 – Amounts received other than political donations

1. Click 'Add' to enter any amounts you received that were not political donations for the financial year. You only need to add amounts greater than the \$1,050 disclosure threshold. This includes multiple amounts received from the same person or entity that exceed the disclosure threshold when combined.

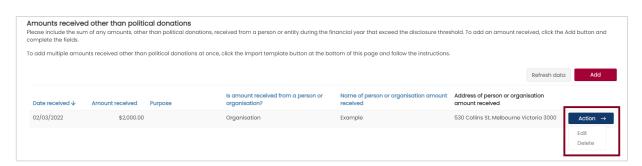
Note: You may consolidate 2 or more amounts received from one person or entity into one line entry.



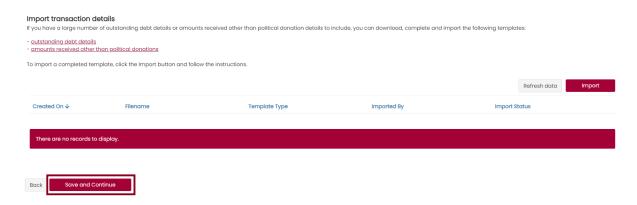
- 2. Complete all fields in the 'Amounts received other than political donations' form.
- 3. Click 'Submit' and repeat step 2 to add any further line entries.



4. To edit or delete any line entries, click 'Action' next to the relevant entry, then select 'Edit' or 'Delete'.



- 5. Enter the details from your records into the required fields and check the fields match your records.
- 6. Click 'Save and continue' to save a draft version of the annual return or click 'Back' to return to the previous screen.

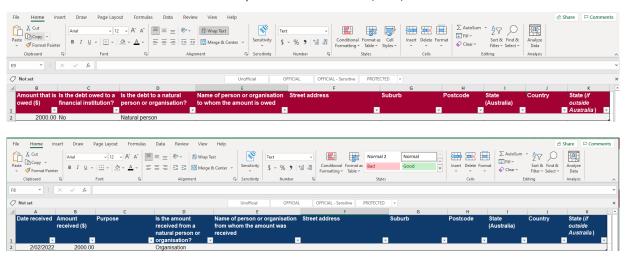


Enter transaction details - bulk import

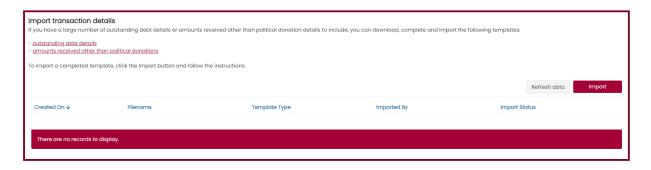
If you don't want to enter the <u>individual details manually</u>, you can bulk import the transaction details of any outstanding debts or amounts received other than political donations. You must download our templates to do this successfully.



- 1. Download the correct template for the details you are importing.
- outstanding debt details (red)
- amounts received other than political donations (blue)



- 2. Add transaction details to the template and save the document.
- 3. Select the 'Import' button



Import a transaction details template

×

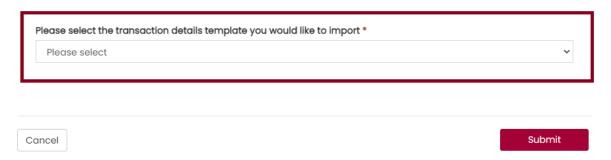
Please download, complete and submit one of the following templates:

- outstanding debt details
- amounts received other than political donations

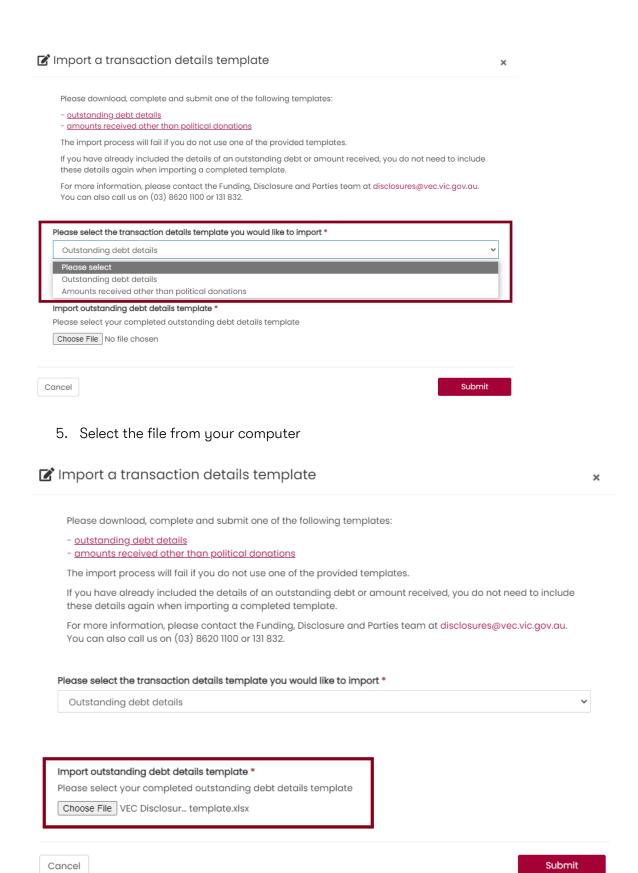
The import process will fail if you do not use one of the provided templates.

If you have already included the details of an outstanding debt or amount received, you do not need to include these details again when importing a completed template.

For more information, please contact the Funding, Disclosure and Parties team at disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au. You can also call us on (03) 8620 1100 or 131 832.



4. Select which template you are uploading



6. Click 'Submit'



×

Please download, complete and submit one of the following templates:

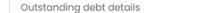
- outstanding debt details
- amounts received other than political donations

The import process will fail if you do not use one of the provided templates.

If you have already included the details of an outstanding debt or amount received, you do not need to include these details again when importing a completed template.

For more information, please contact the Funding, Disclosure and Parties team at disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au. You can also call us on (03) 8620 1100 or 131 832.

Please select the transaction details template you would like to import *



~

Import outstanding debt details template *

Please select your completed outstanding debt details template

Choose File VEC Disclosur... template.xlsx

Cancel



7. You will see confirmation that we have received your file. Your details can take up to 30 minutes to process. You can't finish your annual return until the template has been processed.

Import a transaction details template

×

Your Outstanding debt details template has been submitted for processing. **This may take up to 30** minutes.

We will email you to let you know if the import has completed successfully.

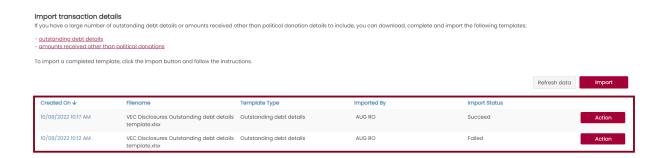
You will not be able submit your annual return until the import is complete.

For more information, please contact the Funding, Disclosure and Parties team at disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au. You can also call us on (03) 8260 1100 or 131 832.



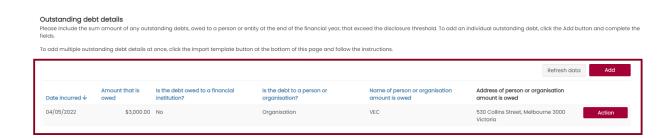
8. We will email you to let you know if your import was successful. If it wasn't you will need to import the template again.

Click 'Action' and 'view' to see any error messages about your import.

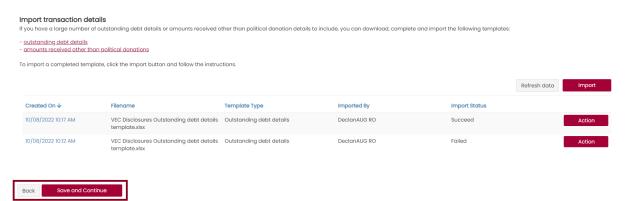


9. The transaction details will appear when your file has been successfully imported.

Click 'Action' to edit or delete any incorrect items.

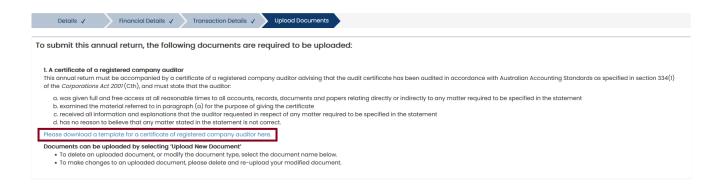


10. Click 'Save and continue' to save a draft version of your return, or click 'Back' to return to the previous screen.

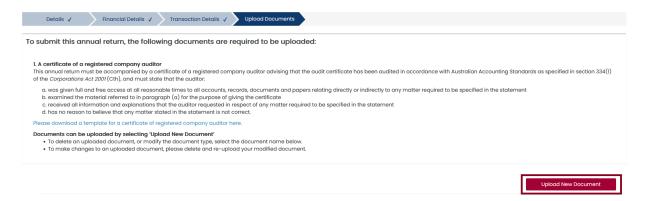


Upload audit certificate

1. Ensure your audit certificate complies with the <u>Audit requirements</u> set out above. You can download and use the <u>registered company auditor certificate template</u>.

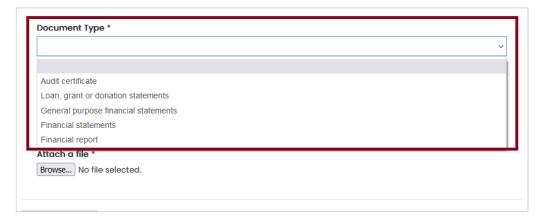


2. Click 'Upload new document' to upload the completed audit certificate.

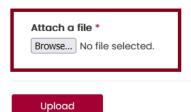


Note: The maximum file size for a document is 5 megabytes (5MB). Larger files must be emailed directly to us at disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au.

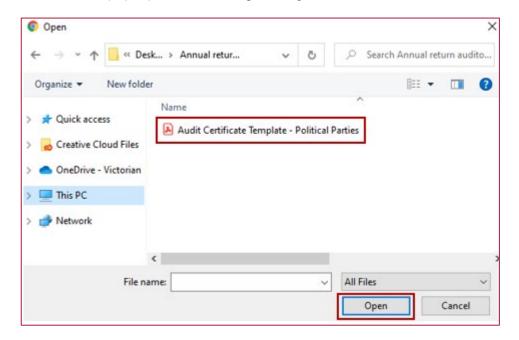
3. A pop-up window will prompt you to select the document type from the drop-down list. You can also include a description of the document.



4. Click 'Browse...'

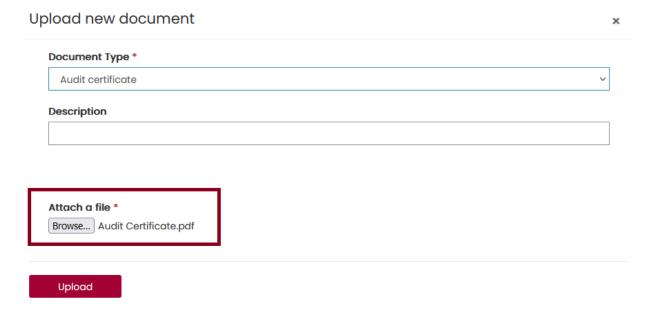


5. In the pop-up window, navigate to your document, select it and click 'Open'.



Note: The pop-up window may vary depending on your computer's operating system.

The name of the file you chose will appear next to the 'Browse' button.

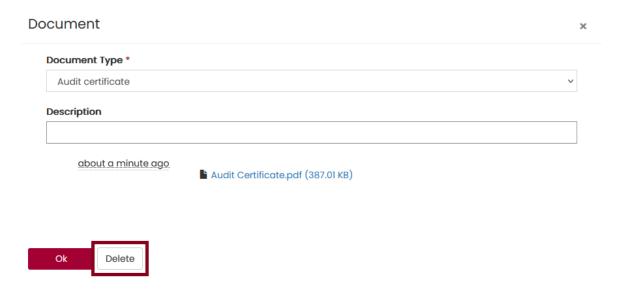


6. Check the file is correct and click 'Upload'.

The document will appear as a line item. Any document that appears here is saved to your annual return, and will remain with the annual return even if you navigate away from this page.

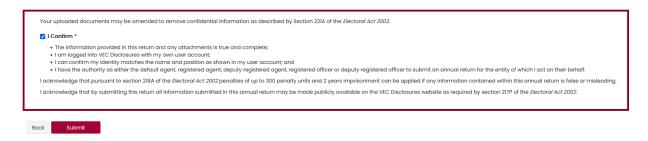


If you need to delete or modify a document in this list, click the document name and click 'Delete'.



Submit annual return

1. Review the acknowledgements and select the 'I confirm' checkbox.



Note: if you have any questions about the acknowledgments contact us at <u>disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au</u>.

2. Click 'Submit'.

A submission confirmation screen will appear. We will review your annual return and contact you if we need more information.

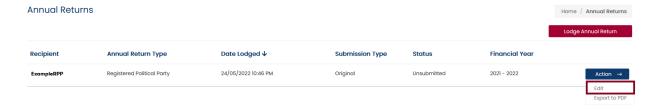


Edit and submit an annual return in another session

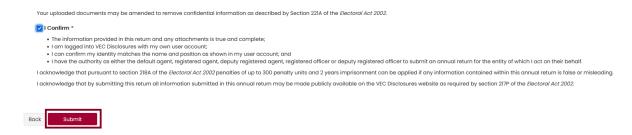
Returns that haven't been submitted will show as 'unsubmitted' on the annual returns page in <u>VEC Disclosures</u>.



1. Click 'Action' and select 'Edit' to continue working on your annual return.



2. When you have completed and reviewed your annual return, tick the boxes to confirm you've read the acknowledgments, then click 'Submit'.



The annual return will then appear as 'Submitted' on the Annual returns page.

Important: If you need to amend an annual return after you've submitted it, refer to the <u>Request an amendment</u> section or email <u>disclosures@vec.vic.gov.au</u>.



View and export an annual return

You can now view and export a copy of your annual return for record keeping.

1. Click 'Action' and select 'Export to PDF'.



2. Click 'Export'. This will download a PDF version of the annual return.



3. To go back to the Annual returns page, click 'Annual returns' in the breadcrumb.



Request an amendment to your annual return

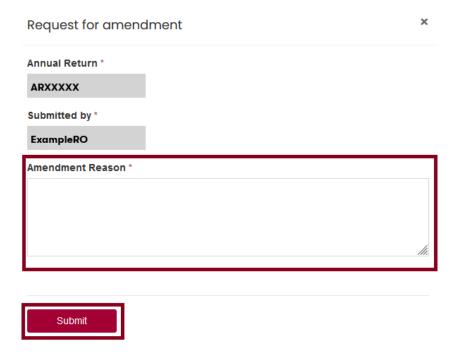
If you need to amend an annual return after submitting it, you can request an amendment through <u>VEC Disclosures</u>.

1. On the Annual returns page, click 'Action' and select 'Request for amendment'.



2. Enter the details of your amendment in the 'Amendment reason' field, then click 'Submit'.

Important: The details provided in the fields below will be published on <u>VEC Disclosures</u>. Please do not include any personal information.



Your amendment request will be considered in accordance with section 221 of the Electoral Act. We will contact you if we need more information.

