Every vote is shaping Victoria

At 6.00pm on 27 November 2010 voting closed at voting centres around the State and the Victorian Electoral Commission’s (VEC) trained staff began counting the votes to determine who would take office for the next term of Parliament. With 3.58 million eligible electors at the close of the roll (20,000 more than at the Federal election in August), the 2010 Victorian State election was truly the biggest electoral event in the State’s history. It was also an election that saw some significant electoral opportunities and challenges.

Heavy rain on election day may have dampened spirits at the many sausage sizzles that took place around the State; however, voter turnout improved slightly on 2006 figures. In addition to this, an unprecedented number of votes were cast in the two weeks prior to election day.

Recent legislative changes also enabled electors to enrol and vote on the day and some 30,000 electors took advantage of this option. The VEC also took a range of steps to deliver enrolment and voting in an accessible and easy way. This included the provision of wheelchair accessible voting centres, Braille ballot papers, Easy English information booklets and large print materials, in-language resources and electronically assisted voting; enabling the delivery of a secret ballot to electors who could be otherwise disenfranchised.

The fact that the election was so close meant there was considerable pressure on election staff and an anxious wait for candidates. All counts and rechecks were conducted as quickly as possible without compromising the highest levels of accuracy.

The 2010 State election was the culmination of more than two years of preparations, as well as the concerted effort of more than 80 VEC staff members and the 20,000 people engaged to assist at election offices, voting centres, the postal vote processing centre and the central count centre.

Progress on municipal reviews

In May the VEC provided recommendations to the Minister for Local Government on the appropriate electoral structures for nine City and Shire councils around Victoria. The nine councils are the first in a group of 27 that will be reviewed before the local government elections late next year.

Paul Strickland, VEC Electoral Enrolment Manager, is leading the reviews and said it’s not always easy to develop electoral boundaries. “Often the VEC models a number of options based on population distribution, communities of interest and the requirements established in the Local Government Act,” Paul said. “Some of the options simply won’t work and we value public submissions as a way of giving us information about options.”

For more information about the electoral representation review process, please see page 3.
Message from the
Electoral Commissioner

It’s been a busy start to 2011 with the Broadmeadows District by-election in February and nine council countbacks and four council by-elections since January.

Both the 2010 State election and the by-election went extremely well and the stand out characteristic in both cases is electors’ increasing preference for early voting. This change in voting behaviour, coupled with the success of the i-Vote online voting system in New South Wales' State election in March, may well herald the start of major changes to our country’s century old system of voting.

Some of the changes will likely be seen in the disability area. The VEC is continuing to work with its Electoral Access Advisory Group and has developed a new draft Disability Action Plan to maximise accessibility for all Victorians. From the provision of accessible voting centres through to employment of staff with a disability, we need to design our environment, products, services and communication to be useable by everyone to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation or specialist design.

A more recent change has been our relocation to new premises at Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne. The larger premises will enable us to better deliver election staff training and inhouse call centre services and offer a brighter working environment for staff. The move has been a major logistical exercise and my congratulations to the VEC team that coordinated this effort with virtually no impact on our business operations.

Representation reviews have commenced for the 27 councils undergoing review prior to the 2012 council elections. This is one of the more complex duties of the commission, involving major community consultation, mapping design and statistical analysis to ensure that each vote has the same value within each municipality. More information on this process can be found on the next page.

Our major focus over the oncoming year will be the planning and preparation for the tendering and conduct of the 79 council elections to be held late in 2012 (see page 7) and the commencement of corporate planning for the 2012–2015 term. Our approach is simple: build on past successes.

Steve Tully
Electoral Commissioner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total enrolment</td>
<td>3,353,845</td>
<td>3,582,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total votes counted</td>
<td>3,109,907</td>
<td>3,329,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter turnout (participation rate)</td>
<td>92.73%</td>
<td>92.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain in Melbourne on the day</td>
<td>0mm</td>
<td>14.2mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered How-to-Vote cards</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>1101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the line votes % (average across all regions)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informality Upper House</td>
<td>4.28%</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informality Lower House</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats won by a margin of less than 3%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recounts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of voting centre venues on election day</td>
<td>1,808</td>
<td>1,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special facilities provided with mobile voting services</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election day staff</td>
<td>14,811</td>
<td>16,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot papers printed</td>
<td>12,281,000</td>
<td>12,009,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot packs sent to postal voters</td>
<td>226,170</td>
<td>350,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total website hits over election period (estimated 2006)</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
<td>3,287,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls to the telephone enquiry service</td>
<td>227,246</td>
<td>106,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Election campaign advertisements</td>
<td>5,526</td>
<td>3,182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Electoral representation reviews:
Your chance to have a say

The Local Government Act 1989 requires the VEC to periodically conduct electoral representation reviews for each municipality in the State, except the City of Melbourne. The City of Melbourne is subject to a separate piece of legislation (the City of Melbourne Act 2001) and the Minister for Local Government has decided that the VEC will also conduct a representation review for this municipality later this year.

The purpose of an electoral representation review is to ensure fair and equitable representation for everyone in the municipality. To achieve this, the VEC determines the:

- optimal internal structure of the municipality, such as the number and positioning of wards; and
- number of councillors for the municipality to provide equitable representation for the community.

The VEC’s role is to conduct the review and provide a final recommendation to the Minister for Local Government.

An electoral representation review is a good opportunity for community groups, neighbourhood associations, local businesses, and individual residents or ratepayers to have their say on how their council’s electoral arrangements could be structured. To facilitate this, there are two opportunities for the public to make submissions which are taken into account during the review process — preliminary submissions and response submissions.

- Preliminary submissions allow the public to make suggestions on what should be considered by the VEC when modelling options and considering the number of councillors.
- Response submissions provide the public with a forum to respond to the options being considered by the VEC, noting why they agree or disagree with any of the options on the table. People who have lodged a response submission can also request to be heard by the VEC in person at a public hearing.

The VEC also undertakes its own research into the municipality’s demographic, economic and social profile. This information, along with development projections, is built into models of possible boundaries to measure how well they absorb likely population changes and represent communities of interest. Under the Act, the ratio of voters to councillors for each ward is required to stay within +/- 10% of the average for the municipality overall.

In some cases no changes are required at all; however, when a municipality has had, or is expected to have, significant change in population, boundaries may need to be altered to ensure that everyone is represented equally.

Since the conclusion of the 2010 State election, nine local councils have been reviewed and a further 18 will be reviewed prior to the next local government elections in late 2012.

To see the schedule and for more information visit vec.vic.gov.au/reviews/

### Upcoming reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macedon Ranges Shire</td>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>City of Brimbank</td>
<td>12 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell Shire</td>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>City of Frankston</td>
<td>18 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathbogie Shire</td>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>City of Monash</td>
<td>18 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Moreland</td>
<td>11 July</td>
<td>Mornington Peninsula Shire</td>
<td>18 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Maribyrnong</td>
<td>12 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Later in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia Shire</td>
<td></td>
<td>City of Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Casey</td>
<td></td>
<td>South Gippsland Shire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Hobsons Bay</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surf Coast Shire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Hume</td>
<td></td>
<td>City of Whittlesea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Latrobe</td>
<td></td>
<td>City of Wyndham</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Passport to Democracy

Last year more than 2,200 students across Victoria participated in the VEC’s Passport to Democracy program and over twice that number are expected to do so by the end of this year.

The unique program takes students on a journey of their own creation, drawing on their concerns and issues to make the connection between politics and the things that are important to them. It prompts students to consider how they can make an impact on issues they care about and ultimately, how they can engage with the community to achieve positive change.

Program Coordinator, Michelle Templeton, said she has been excited by the level of enthusiasm and takeup the program has achieved. “Teachers really appreciate the fact that we provide lots of support with the class kit and in-school professional development. Students love the inquiry-based approach which brings the concept of democracy into focus.”

Program information and resources can be obtained by contacting Michelle Templeton on (03) 8620 1196 or michelle.templeton@vec.vic.gov.au

In late May, education staff from electoral commissions around Australia met in Adelaide for the annual Electoral Education Network gathering. Hosted by the Electoral Commission SA (ECSA) and facilitated by Alex Markham (the VEC’s Senior Education Officer), the event was attended by electoral educators from New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia, as well as several branches of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

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Consolidating electoral education

“(The meeting) worked brilliantly and was proof of how partnerships and networking can really work well. It’s an impetus for bigger and better things and ... everyone came out of it feeling positive and keen to see the network expand.”

Leela Kwitko (Manager Community Awareness & Research, Electoral Commission SA).

With the focus on collaboration, representatives discussed their initiatives from the past year, compared notes on successful strategies, and looked at how these successes could be built on in the future. In addition to this, the Director of the AEC Indigenous Electoral Participation Program, Alistair Legge, provided a great insight into the national program that has been running for almost two years.

For more information about electoral education services please contact Alex Markham (alex.markham@vec.vic.gov.au) or the electoral commission in your state.
A continuing commitment to improve access to electoral services for people with disabilities sits behind the VEC’s latest version of its Disability Action Plan.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated in 2009 that at least four million Australians were living with some form of disability; 3.1 million of which had a core activity restriction — in self-care, mobility or communication — caused by their disability.

The six objectives of the VEC’s new draft Disability Action Plan include:

- promoting partnerships with peak bodies;
- improving physical access to voting;
- improving accessibility and clarity of information for Victorians with a disability;
- providing for more Victorians to have a secret vote and where that is not possible, that the vote is cast as intended;
- improving staff awareness and assistance; and
- improving the VEC’s capacity to employ and appropriately task people with a disability.

The draft Plan has been developed in consultation with the VEC’s Electoral Access Advisory Group and is available for comment. A copy of the draft Plan can be found on the VEC’s website at vec.vic.gov.au/disability, or a hardcopy can be mailed upon request by calling 131 832.

All comments should be made in writing and directed to:

**Ms Sue Lang**
Manager Communication
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11
530 Collins St
Melbourne VIC 3000

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Key innovations of the 2010 State election

**iPhone app**
To further engage the increasingly broad smartphone user base, the VEC (through the auspices of Information Victoria and Deloitte) released the free iPhone application “Vote Victoria” in the lead up to election day.

**Electronic roll markoff**
To further streamline the voting process, a new electronic system to mark voters off the roll was used in every early voting centre, approximately 110 election day voting centres and by the VEC’s mobile voting teams.

This new system meant electoral staff had access to the complete roll for the election (not just the roll for their particular district).

The benefits of the electronic roll markoff system were most visible at the early voting centres in the city centre. Voters from anywhere in Victoria were able to be marked off the roll and vote without the need for declaration paperwork, which takes longer to complete and requires double handling to process.

**Online staff training**
Online training modules were included in the training package for voting centre election officials for the first time at the 2010 election. Modules were tailored for different roles, including managers and declaration issuing officers. Election Managers were able to monitor the progress and success of election officials in completing each module.

The online training complemented other components of the training package, including hard copy manuals, a training DVD, and face-to-face training.

Response to the online training was positive, with 80% of election officials surveyed rating it as “effective” or better in preparing them for their role.

**SMS reminder service**
Two SMS services were trialled during the election; this was the first time the VEC has used the technology.

More than 750 people were sent enrolment forms after spotting the “call to action” in early advertising. In addition, nearly 5,000 people signed up for SMS voting reminders on election day.

The success of the project confirms the increasing preference of many people to use personalised, mobile tools.

**Electronically Assisted Voting**
Electronically Assisted Voting (EAV) was available at every early voting centre utilised for the 2010 State election and at early voting centres located in the UK.

The system, which offered either touchscreen kiosks or digital telephone options, was used by many hundreds of people.

“Casting a secret vote is a key facet of Victoria’s democracy,” said Steve Tully, Electoral Commissioner.

“This technology meant that people with a vision or motor function impairment, or those with English language or literacy difficulties could cast a secret vote for the first time in Victoria. I’m very proud of that.”

Providing EAV facilities to Victorians overseas enabled votes to be securely and instantly transmitted back to Melbourne, so that they could be counted more quickly.
The focus of the VEC in the latter half of this year will be the production of a draft plan for the conduct of the 2012 council elections.

The plan will detail the VEC’s proposed approach to the administration and public awareness campaign for the elections. Much like in 2008, this plan will form the basis of the VEC’s tender for the conduct of the elections.

Several successful initiatives were introduced in the 2010 State election (see facing page) and some of these will be incorporated, as well as the provision of translated enrolment forms online and other programs.

Ready to work?

To successfully deliver an election, the VEC requires the dedication of a great many staff. From working as a casual in a voting centre on election day to longer term roles as Senior Election Officials, the VEC periodically needs to boost its staffing levels.

Casuals are always needed

Anyone who is interested in casual employment at any of the elections the VEC conducts should register online at vec.vic.gov.au/appointments. Elections can arise at any time, so get on the register to be notified when there is work available in your area.

Think you could manage an election?

In addition to casual positions, the VEC maintains a pool of Senior Election Officials. Prior to each election, a selection of Senior Election Officials are appointed as Election Managers and Assistant Election Managers (for State elections), or as Returning Officers and Deputy Returning Officers (for local government elections). These are challenging roles that require management skills, as well as a sound knowledge of the local area.

Prospective election staff must also be able to satisfy the VEC’s impartiality requirements and be available for a full-time appointment for 8–12 weeks each election year. For more information contact the VEC recruitment team at seorecruit@vec.vic.gov.au or call 03 8620 1100.

Did you know?

Council elections can be held either by post or by attendance and this is determined by each council individually.

Postal elections are usually slightly cheaper to run and often result in a better turnout (more people voting) and lower informality (fewer votes that can’t be counted).

In 2008, most councils in Victoria had postal elections.
ResourceSmart and WasteWise

ResourceSmart principles are embedded into work practices across the organisation, reflecting the VEC’s ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability.

Driven by staff ingenuity, a myriad of initiatives (big and small) have resulted in improved efficiency and a reduced environmental footprint. Activities such as fitting out voting centres with furniture and equipment made from recycled cardboard have been in place for many years.

Newer initiatives implemented at the 2010 State election included:

• a range of computer applications to fully automate the production of ballot papers, reducing paper use by approximately 30,000 A4-sized pages;

• replacing paper employment applications by using an online expression of interest facility to recruit 17,000 casual staff;

• an online training program for election officials reducing paper use, and eliminating the need for some election officials to travel to attend training sessions;

• the use of netbooks to electronically mark electors off the roll, reducing the need for printed electoral rolls at voting centres; and

• voting instructions in 19 languages printed directly onto voting screens, eliminating the need for large numbers of printed leaflets to be supplied to over 1,600 voting centres;

On the eve of the State election, the VEC was awarded Silver WasteWise certification in recognition of its waste management accomplishments.

In addition, the VEC was recognised by the Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability for its commitment to environmental sustainability leadership, communication and the integration of core business and environmental goals.

A certificate of recognition was accepted by VEC Print and Design Officer, Brett Elliott, who was instrumental in improving the VEC’s environmental performance. Brett developed computer applications that increased efficiency and substantially reduced the amount of paper used at the 2010 State election.

Staff are now looking forward to building on these achievements by embracing the improved sustainability features at the VEC’s new address.

Feedback

The VEC welcomes feedback. Please contact Thomas Harper on (03) 8620 1189 or thomas.harper@vec.vic.gov.au with your comments.

Printed on 100% recycled paper.

Liz Williams (Deputy Electoral Commissioner), Professor Kate Auty (Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability), Brett Elliott (Print and Design Officer) and Aileen Duke (Corporate Planning and Reporting Officer) at the “Structures for sustainability” evening.

Left: Michael Fellows helps with recycling as the VEC prepares to move office.