

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
ELECTIONS **2016**



ELECTION SERVICE

**PLAN**



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# Foreword

Victoria's 2016 local government elections will be our State's largest single election program. Over 4.5 million enrolled voters and upwards of 2,000 candidates will participate in nearly 300 individual elections.

I am proud to present this election service plan detailing how the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) intends to deliver such a significant program of elections.

This service plan outlines the VEC's work at each stage of the election timeline and sets targets to assess the success of the program following its completion. It also details the areas where local councils will be contributing to the preparations for these elections and builds on the important partnership between the VEC and its local government clients.



The Victorian Parliament has recently amended the *Local Government Act 1989* to establish the VEC as the statutory election service provider to the local government sector. The legislation has also introduced new aspects to the election program and changed or removed requirements in other parts of the election. More so than ever, it is incumbent on the VEC to deliver these local government elections to the highest levels of integrity and in the interests of all Victorians.

I look forward to working alongside the local government sector as we deliver this election service plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Warwick Gately". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Warwick Gately AM  
Electoral Commissioner

# History of the plan

This document has been prepared in consultation with Victoria's local government sector. The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) released the draft election service plan in September 2015 and presented the plan at a series of consultation sessions held across the State during October.

The VEC appreciates the council officers who made themselves available to attend the session and contribute to planning for the 2016 local government elections.

For further information on the VEC's local government program and planning for the 2016 local government elections, contact:

Local Government Program Manager  
Victorian Electoral Commission  
Level 11, 530 Collins Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

**Email** [LGProgram@vec.vic.gov.au](mailto:LGProgram@vec.vic.gov.au)

**Fax** (03) 9621 1204

This election service plan is also available on the VEC's website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat formats.

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# 1. Background and purpose

## VEC's role in conducting local government elections

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is the statutory election service provider to Victorian local councils.<sup>1</sup> The VEC has been the sole provider of election services to Victorian local councils since 2004 and has a long history of working in partnership with the local government sector.

The VEC conducts extensive debriefing after each local government electoral event. Following the 2012 local government elections, the VEC submitted a comprehensive report to the Minister for Local Government in 2013. The report, which is available on the VEC's website, contained a number of recommendations and was referred to by the recent Local Government Electoral Review Panel and the current Government's review into Victoria's local government legal arrangements.

The VEC has a long-standing commitment to the local government sector to deliver high quality election services. Planning for the 2016 local government elections commenced in early 2015 and recent changes to the Act have provided additional assurances useful for preparing for the program. The VEC has prepared this service plan on the basis of conducting elections on behalf of all of Victoria's 79 local councils.

## Principles

The VEC's local government election service program follows two major principles:

### Local focus for election services

The VEC will appoint a Returning Officer for each local council's election who will manage the local conduct of each election. Accordingly, the management of candidates, enquiries from the public, and vote counting will take place locally within the municipality wherever possible.

Some contingency plans will be put in place to cover overflow enquiries from voters and where suitable counting venues cannot be secured within a municipality.

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<sup>1</sup> Following commencement of the electoral provisions of the *Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015* (in time for the 2016 local government elections).

## Costs to be kept to a minimum

The VEC's election service plan aims to provide quality election services for minimum cost. The VEC's local government election program will meet all statutory requirements and ensure that customer service and accuracy are not compromised. Each aspect of the 2016 local government election program, but particularly any initiatives or procedures that are being introduced to the program for the first time, will be analysed in detail for their cost and benefits.

Although cost increases in some areas of the local government election program are unavoidable, the VEC will look for opportunities for efficiencies to help absorb cost increases.

## Legal framework

The local government election program in Victoria is governed by the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) and other laws involved in local government election matters, including the *City of Greater Geelong Act 1993*, *City of Melbourne Act 2001* and, in relation to compulsory voting enforcement, *Infringements Act 2006*. The VEC is guided in technical and procedural matters by the Regulations established under these laws.

Importantly, the Act is the basis of all local government electoral events. The VEC has prepared a timeline for attendance and postal elections based on the legislation that will be in place at the time of the elections. These timelines are shown in Appendix 2. Note that the VEC's timelines do not include decisions that must be made by councils to prepare for an election, such as the need for councils to resolve to change their method of voting at least eight months prior to the election (i.e. from attendance to postal voting or from postal to attendance voting).

The recent passage of the *Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015* has clarified a number of aspects of local government elections. Once these changes come into effect, in time for the 2016 local government elections, the Act will include a statutory provider for the elections (the VEC) and make changes to several areas of the election program. The VEC has updated this service plan to reflect these new legislative arrangements.

The VEC is also aware that the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2005 are scheduled to be replaced prior to the 2016 local government elections. This election service plan was prepared on the current regulatory arrangements and the VEC will adjust the program wherever necessary to accommodate any new regulations.

## **Purpose of this document**

The purpose of this document is to involve councils early in the VEC's planning for the 2016 local government elections.

It should be noted that the election services outlined in this document apply for attendance and postal elections, as applicable. The election service plan does not include any variations that are specific to the City of Greater Geelong or City of Melbourne elections, which will be considered separately in discussions with those councils.

In preparing this plan, the VEC has considered the volumes and timelines associated with the conduct of 79 concurrent elections, as well as feedback from the 2012 local government elections, areas of potential risk, and initiatives that improve the efficiency and quality of the election services while minimising increases in overall cost.

The document outlines:

- the VEC's proposed timeline for election preparations, responding to tenders and negotiating electoral service agreements, and the election and post-election periods
- the opportunities that concurrent local government elections provide, balanced with some challenges that need to be addressed by the VEC as an election service provider to local councils
- a description of the election services that the VEC proposes to offer councils using either the attendance or postal method of voting
- new areas and key changes to the VEC's election services from the 2012 local government elections, with reasons why the change is suggested.

By publishing the election service plan early in the planning timeline, the VEC is able to establish the election services it proposes to offer councils through its service level negotiations in 2016. However, the VEC believes it is also necessary to communicate this information to the local government sector as early as possible to maximise cost efficiency and quality, and to minimise risk.



## 2. Performance targets

In order to evaluate the overall success of the 2016 local government election program, the VEC has prepared a series of performance targets to report on after the completion of the program. These targets include aspirational and operational measures and will allow the VEC to more accurately focus its reporting.

### Election preparation

The VEC will:

1. Establish all election service agreements with local councils by 27 May 2016.
2. Establish election offices, voting centres and early voting centres, where relevant, that are suitably located within the municipality, and publish accurate information on their accessibility level.
3. Conduct a public awareness campaign to inform all Victorians of their opportunity to vote with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people experiencing homelessness, people living with a disability, and the Indigenous community.
4. Establish a framework to appropriately evaluate and respond to complaints and enquiries, including timely referral of compliance matters to the relevant investigating authority.

### Election conduct

The VEC will:

5. Achieve at least 99.95% accuracy in each municipal voters' roll, excluding processing errors outside of the VEC's control.
6. Ensure all communication products are produced in an accurate and timely manner, are compliant with the legislation, and are focused on enhancing electoral understanding and participation.
7. Provide information to assist prospective candidates and ensure systems provide efficient processing of nominations and candidate information.
8. Lodge all postal ballot material with Australia Post within the required timeframes.

9. Declare all elections before 5.00 pm on Friday 28 October 2016.
10. Maximise opportunities to increase voter participation in local government elections.

### Election outcomes

The VEC will:

11. Establish robust election procedures so that no election can be overturned as a result of the VEC's processes.
12. Evaluate its performance at each level of the local government election program and ensure its reporting obligations are met.
13. Implement reconciliation and integrity checks to ensure correct recording of results during counting activities and during the packaging, movement and storage of election material.
14. Maintain accountability for the cost of local government elections and continue to identify opportunities to reduce the cost imposed on councils.

### 3. Proposed timeline

The lead-time for the management of 79 council elections is estimated to be 12–16 months. This is equivalent to the lead-time required for the management of a State election. As such, the VEC has established the following timeline to ensure that services can be produced in a timely fashion and resources can be appropriately and efficiently allocated.

The more detailed timelines that apply for the election periods for attendance and postal methods of voting are included in Appendix 2.

Date	Activity
<b>2015</b>	
October	Consultation sessions to present the proposed election program to the sector
Friday 6 November	The period for feedback on the draft election service plan ends
By Friday 18 December	Final election service plan is completed and dispatched to the sector Election cost estimates are prepared and dispatched to councils
<b>2016</b>	
January to end of March	Service level negotiations with councils, including finalising key parameters, preparing quotes and election service agreements
February to end of June	Contract manager briefings with council contacts, including inspection of council-provided election office and/or early voting accommodation (if applicable)
Monday 22 February	Final day for councils to resolve to change their method of voting
1 March to 30 April	Period for receiving preliminary voters' roll data from local councils
During April	Final period for finalising electoral service agreements
April to June	Period for councils to action the VEC's feedback on preliminary voters' roll data
Friday 22 April	Statutory deadline for the VEC to submit final reports for electoral representation and subdivision reviews with the Minister
Friday 29 April	All electoral service agreements between VEC and councils fixed
Beginning of July	Access to election office accommodation is required for connections
Monday 11 July	Date for the provision of primary council enrolment data (fixed by the Registrar)
During August	Delivery and installation of election offices
Friday 26 August	Entitlement date at 4.00 pm Final date for councils to resolve to allow counting of votes outside of the local government area
Wednesday 14 September	Election offices open to the public
Thursday 15 September	Certification of the voters' roll by the Registrar Opening of the nomination period
Tuesday 20 September	Close of nominations at 12 noon Ballot draws to determine the ballot paper orders
Wednesday 21 September	Opening of early voting and postal voting for attendance elections Opening of special circumstance voting for postal elections Period for lodging how-to-vote cards for registration by the Returning Officer opens for attendance elections Deadline for personal statements and photographs for postal elections at 12 noon
Friday 23 September	Deadline for indications of preferences for postal elections at 12 noon
Friday 7 October	Mail out of the <i>EasyVote</i> letter to voters in attendance elections
Friday 14 October	Deadline for lodging how-to-vote cards for registration by the Returning Officer for attendance elections at 12 noon
Thursday 20 October	Deadline for applying to receive a postal vote for attendance elections at 12 noon
Friday 21 October	Close of voting for postal elections at 6.00 pm Close of early voting for attendance elections at 6.00 pm
Saturday 22 October	Election day voting centres for attendance elections are open between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm; close of voting for attendance elections at 6.00 pm Extraction and counting activities commence for postal elections
23 October to 28 October	Counting and declarations
<b>2017</b>	
Early January	Non-voter follow up commences

## Critical elements to the proposed timeline

### Contracting

Recent changes to the Act provide increased certainty to the number of council elections involved with the VEC's local government election program and remove the requirement for councils to tender for their election services. Nevertheless, the VEC will still establish electoral service agreements with each local council to ensure transparency with the costing arrangement and administer any contingency services that may be required.

The VEC will contact each council from the middle of January 2016 to finalise key parameters so that it can commence preparing quotes and service level agreements. The VEC must have all of these agreements in place by the end of April 2016 to ensure that it is in the best negotiating position with suppliers by having established parameters.

Compulsory voting enforcement, including the prosecution of non-voters, is now a mandatory requirement under the Act and will be costed separately under the service agreement. The timeline for compulsory voting enforcement will extend beyond the 2016-17 financial year as prosecutions progress through the court process.

Similar to the contract arrangements that were proposed in 2012, the VEC's service agreements will include three service levels — (1) the preparation of the municipal voters' roll, (2) conduct of the election, and (3) compulsory voting enforcement. This is in response to legal challenges in other Australian jurisdictions and advice that was received prior to the 2012 local government elections specifying that the conduct of the election and compulsory voting enforcement are discrete activities in the Act.

The VEC notes that some councils may still be undergoing electoral representation or subdivision reviews and may not have a finalised electoral structure by the end of April 2016. The VEC will provide election costs based on the current or recommended structure, depending on what stage the review is at. Alternative cost estimates can be prepared for each eventuality.

### Voters' roll

The quality of each election is largely dependent on the quality of the voters' roll and the timelines that apply for roll preparation are very tight. The VEC is keen to work with councils as early as possible to maximise the quality of the voters' roll and reduce

the opportunity for errors. This will require preliminary roll data to be available from 1 March 2016. Key dates relating to the receipt of roll data from councils and the preparation of the voters' roll are included in the timeline — see Appendix 3. Since the authority to collect individual dates of birth on notices of acquisition has been in place since 2005, the VEC expects that councils will have dates of birth included with at least 80% of the Chief Executive Officer's voter lists (CEO list) records.

A service to provide councils with dates of birth where council records can be matched with a state roll record is being offered again. To access this service, data should be provided to the VEC as soon as possible. Note that the VEC can manage entire database extracts, not just the CEO list.

### Declaration timetable

At the 2012 local government elections, the VEC declared all elections by the Friday after election day (Friday 2 November 2012).

For postal elections conducted in 2012, the extraction of ballot papers did not commence until Saturday morning. This allowed all returned ballot packs to be processed and any possible duplicate returns to be identified following the close of voting. Several other factors were considered when deciding to schedule the extraction to commence on Saturday. For instance, the VEC noted concerns with occupational health and safety issues in relation to staff working very long hours over the entire election weekend. If election staff appeared to scrutineers to be rushed or fatigued after the close of voting, there may be an increased possibility of applications to the Municipal Electoral Tribunal (MET).

For the 2016 local government elections, the VEC proposes to have all elections declared by the Friday after election day (i.e. Friday 28 October).

More detail regarding the proposed conduct of counts is included in section 5 of this election service plan.

## 4. Opportunities and challenges

### Opportunities

The concurrent conduct of 79 council elections provides a number of opportunities, including the opportunity to promote the elections on a statewide basis through the advertising and communication campaign. This will include ensuring consistencies where possible across elections, to reduce possible confusion for voters. The VEC has included a statewide component in its proposed advertising and communication strategy.

Further opportunities include the ability to evaluate and consolidate statistics, as well as report on all elections during the one reporting year.

### Challenges

In planning to conduct 79 local government elections, the VEC has considered a number of challenges: the estimated volumes, timelines, experience from previous elections, cost, quality, risk, and the community's and local government sector's expectations. A table showing the volumes involved in the conduct of the 78 concurrent local government elections in 2012 is included in Appendix 5. It is expected that the conduct of elections for 79 councils in 2016 will involve approximately 290 individual elections.

The VEC has attempted to balance these considerations in putting together this proposed election service package. In doing so, variations have been minimised where uniformity does not compromise quality, particularly if there are further benefits on a statewide basis. For example, providing consistency in the office hours for each election office will have the advantage of reducing possible confusion for voters, production cost and risk, and the uniform hours can be included in statewide advertising.

One challenge for the VEC at previous elections was the uncertainty surrounding the number of local councils that were going to engage the VEC for their elections. As stated previously, recent changes to the Act have resolved this in time for the 2016 local government elections, however, it is still important that the VEC finalises the key parameters involved with delivering each election to ensure it is in a strong negotiating position with suppliers. Delays in finalising these key parameters and the election service agreements more generally will complicate statewide logistical and technical

planning with freight and telecommunication providers.

A further challenge is the short timeline between the close of nominations and the dispatch of ballot packs for postal elections. In order to meet this timeline for approximately 290 individual elections, the VEC is looking at innovative ways to save as many hours as possible during this period. Section 5 of this election service plan provides more information on areas where the VEC is already developing more efficient systems and processes.

The timeline for the production of 79 voters' rolls is also extremely tight, and the strategy that the VEC is proposing in order to meet this target without compromising the quality of the roll is discussed later in this election service plan.

The following sections outline the VEC's service package. Initiatives in place for the 2016 local government elections are summarised in Appendix 1.

Any further changes to the program, including those prompted by any changes with new local government electoral regulations, will be communicated separately.

## 5. Election service package

### Contract management

A contract manager will be appointed to supervise the electoral service agreement for each council. The contract manager will liaise with the council's representative and provide regular reports on the progress of the elections. The contract manager will be responsible for ensuring that the elections are conducted in accordance with the legislation and within the terms of the electoral service agreement. The Contract Management Team is the local government sector's first point of contact for queries in relation to the VEC's election service. At the conclusion of the 2016 local government elections, the contract manager will prepare a report on the elections, including any recommendations for future elections.

The contract manager will work closely with the VEC Communication Team, who will manage the advertising and communications campaign for each local council election. The Communication Team will coordinate the development and placement of advertising, write and distribute media releases, and prepare election information for the VEC's website. Councils will receive copies of all voter information products prior to publication.

### Voters' roll production

The VEC provides all councils with the Electoral Commissioner's voters list (EC list) for council election purposes. This is the list of state electors that are enrolled within that local government area and is designed to assist in the preparation of the CEO list. The EC list is merged with the CEO list to produce the voters' roll for each local council for certification by the Registrar.

The VEC has provided roll production services to local councils since 1995 and has developed sophisticated software tools and processing procedures for maximising the quality of the voters' roll. The process involves a preliminary file from each council for quality checking, a second CEO list at the date fixed by the Registrar, and a third certification CEO list at the entitlement date. The latter two data files are compared using the VEC's software, resulting in a small 'update' file, which can be processed quickly in the two week period allowed for production of the roll for certification. A range of election products is then extracted from the certified roll, including hard copy rolls, ballot mail-out files and voter card extracts.

### Roll data quality

Producing a high quality voters' roll takes significant effort and resources from councils as well as the VEC. Much of this can be done before the election timeline, when legislative deadlines for final roll production restrict the time available for quality assurance. By participating in the preliminary process (March-June 2016) and by investigating and acting on the reports provided from this activity **before** the date for the primary enrolment extract, councils will be in a good position to ensure a high quality voters' roll.

VEC software tools can easily identify exact duplicates (i.e. identical name, date of birth and address) and the council record is removed in accordance with the Act.

However, it is considerably more difficult to identify possible and probable duplicates. The VEC has data processing tools that can flag such records for further investigation, which takes time, and ultimately, VEC and council effort. The VEC has historical enrolment data that can trace changes in a person's enrolment status and location over time, often making it possible to confirm duplicates or to establish that records belong to two different people. All possible duplicates not resolved by the VEC will be referred to council for a final decision, and this is best done in the preliminary phase when there is time to contact voters to clarify their details, including date of birth and any property holdings.

Other checks are done against statewide historical data to try to identify deceased people still appearing on the CEO list and any who have been removed from the Victorian register of electors following medical evidence of unsound mind. In addition, the VEC makes every effort to identify CEO list voters who have been approved to have their address not shown on the State roll (i.e. silent electors) to ensure that their address is not shown on CEO lists for any other voting entitlements they have in other local councils.

The VEC has software that can, in most cases, create a valid address suitable for mailing. Addresses needing further manual clarification are also identified for council checking and correction as necessary, as are possible ward coding errors in council data.

## Timeliness

To make optimum use of the VEC's quality auditing tools, time is the critical element. Negotiating data compatibility, ensuring data validity, identifying, confirming and removing duplicates all take time and effort from both VEC and council staff. The VEC aims for comprehensiveness and accuracy so exchanging data and quality checking data early improves the final product. See the key dates for roll production in Appendix 3.

## Roll production

In order for the final roll to be produced within the legislative timeframe, councils are asked to:

- Ensure that **at least 80%** of CEO list records have **dates of birth**
- Nominate a council officer to resolve data issues promptly during each of the roll production processing periods—
  - preliminary (early March—early June)
  - primary council enrolment data (11 July—17 August)
  - certification (3—14 September)
- Supply a preliminary CEO list in an agreed format (see Appendix 6) as early as possible in the cycle and, at the latest, by 30 April 2016
- Action the reports generated by preliminary roll processing **before** the date fixed for requiring council enrolment data— **Monday 11 July**. This will involve investigating and deciding on duplicate records, removing deceased voters and correcting invalid data
- Supply the council's CEO list in the agreed format by 5.00 pm on Monday 11 July, extracting from the council database one record only across the whole municipality for each voter who is eligible for the CEO list
- Perform as much quality checking of the council enrolment data as possible before the entitlement date
- Supply a certification CEO list in a file in the **same format** as the primary enrolment data (this will be used to generate the update file), no later than 5.00 pm on Monday 29 August 2016.

In processing the primary enrolment data for each council, the VEC plans that no more than 10% of the CEO list records will need to be removed because they are duplicates or deceased. This will be the case if all the preliminary reports to each council have been actioned.

The VEC values its partnership with local councils to meet these deadlines and requirements, and will work tirelessly with each council to ensure a high quality voters' roll. Due to the short timeframe, however, there are additional costs to the VEC if a council cannot meet these targets. Additional risk is unnecessarily introduced when slippages occur or roll feedback from the VEC is not actioned. The level of training required for VEC officers to perform these tasks makes it impossible to employ additional staff at short notice. As a result, and in consultation with the contract manager, the VEC may seek to recover these costs through the electoral service agreement.

## Council software

One further factor that local councils need to be aware of in planning for the 2016 local government elections is the timing of software system upgrades or changes of software provider. These need to be implemented and integrated by February 2016 to minimise risk to the roll production process.

## Certified voters' roll

Recent changes to the Act require the Registrar to certify the voters' roll, rather than each council's Chief Executive Officer. The Registrar is also responsible for making the certified voters' roll available for inspection beginning on the day it is certified until 30 days after election day.

## Provision of voters' rolls to candidates

On request, the VEC will provide each candidate with a copy of the voters' roll for the election in which the candidate has nominated. The roll is provided for election purposes only.

These rolls will be provided electronically and will be in a user friendly format to assist candidates with direct mail campaigning. Before providing the voters' roll to a candidate, they are required to sign a declaration stating that the information will only be used for campaign purposes. The voters' roll must be destroyed or returned to the Returning Officer following the election.

## Advertising and communication campaign

The VEC will deliver a voter information campaign on a local and statewide basis. It has been developed to:

- meet statutory requirements
- increase voters' awareness of their rights and obligations

- maximise voter turnout
- minimise the informal vote.

The VEC will also provide advertising services, media relations, election information and assistance on the VEC's website and will provide an overflow service to respond to calls that have been directed to election offices, when all lines in a particular office are busy. Information in languages other than English and a telephone interpreter service will also be part of the VEC's standard package, where applicable.

### Statutory advertising (all councils)

Statutory advertisements will appear in the general news section of local newspapers nominated by each council, and will comprise the following:

- a 'notice of entitlement' advertisement: covering enrolment entitlements and the entitlement date
- a 'notice of election' advertisement: including how to nominate, details of candidate information session/s, an electorate map and, where applicable, a summary of any variations resulting from a representation review
- a 'voting details' advertisement: including information on how to vote, formality, and how to contact the election office to request replacement ballot material or a postal vote (for attendance elections)
- a 'declaration of results' advertisement.

Local press advertising for all councils will include a telephone enquiry number for the election office, a National Relay Service enquiry number (for people who are deaf, hearing impaired and/or speech impaired) and the VEC's website address. Telephone numbers for the multi-language interpreting service will be included in press advertising for metropolitan councils and, on request, for rural or regional councils or where a non-metropolitan council selects the option of a multi-language leaflet.

The notice of entitlement and notice of election advertisements will also include messaging around the registration requirement for voters who wish to have their ballot material provided in Braille or large print format in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

### Statewide advertising (all councils)

Having all local government elections conducted concurrently allows the VEC to maximise promotion opportunities. The statewide advertising campaign

will promote enrolment and voting, including a final reminder to vote. The cost of the campaign will be separated into metropolitan and regional coverage, and charged to all councils in their respective category on a per voter basis.

All statewide press advertising will include a telephone enquiry number. All press advertisements will also include a National Relay Service enquiry number for people who are deaf, hearing impaired and/or speech impaired, as well as the VEC's website address and telephone numbers for the multi-language interpreting service.

These advertisements will also include messaging around the registration requirement for voters who wish to have their ballot material provided in Braille or large print format in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

### Multi-language advertising campaign (metropolitan councils only)

The statewide advertising campaign will be extended for metropolitan councils to include ethnic press and radio in high need languages. It will comprise two advertisements focusing on enrolment and voting, to raise awareness among people from non-English speaking backgrounds and to encourage formal voting. For many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, radio is the most effective means of communicating key electoral messages. This campaign will be costed across all metropolitan councils on a per voter basis.

### Multi-language telephone interpreting service (all councils)

The telephone interpreting and multi-language information service will operate throughout the election period. Operated by the Victorian Interpreting & Translating Service (VITS), interpreting services are available in more than 100 languages. A minimum of 20 dedicated telephone numbers will be provided for the most widely spoken languages in Victoria (plus a general number capturing all other languages).

Enquiries specific to a particular council election will be costed back to that council. Incoming calls are directed to a VITS interpreter, who then links to the VEC in a three-way telephone conversation to relay information in the person's preferred language.

### Mail-out to blind and vision-impaired voters

The VEC will liaise with Vision Australia (Vic) and Blind Citizens (Vic) to produce material to be sent to all Victorian voters on each of their databases. The

communication will make these voters aware that elections are occurring, and provide basic information about the elections, contact details for further information, and a special hotline number for those who wish to register for Braille or large print ballot material.

### **Voter notice (*EasyVote* letter — all attendance elections)**

The voter notice is personally addressed to each voter, with the intent that it will be kept by the recipient as a reminder to vote. The notice is a requirement of the legislation.

The notice provides ward-specific information regarding the time and venues that voters can cast their vote on election day or at an early voting centre. The notice also includes information regarding postal voting and an electorate map showing ward boundaries and the location of voting centres. Telephone numbers are provided for the telephone enquiry service, the National Relay Service for people who are deaf, hearing impaired and/or speech impaired, as well as the VEC's website address and telephone numbers for the multi-language interpreting service.

### **Uncontested election leaflet (subdivided councils only)**

If a ward election is uncontested, a black and white leaflet will be mailed to affected voters, informing them that their election is uncontested and they are not required to vote for that election at the 2016 local government elections. The leaflet will provide the name of the candidate/s who have nominated and will, in due course, be declared elected. The leaflet will substantially reduce the potential for confusion among voters who are aware of the election but do not receive a ballot pack or *EasyVote* letter in the mail.

Where a subdivided council is entirely uncontested, an uncontested election leaflet will be replaced by a notice in the council's nominated local press.

### **VEC website**

The VEC website will feature comprehensive information about local government elections generally, as well as specific information for each local council's election. Content will be updated at each phase of the election cycle including information about:

- enrolment
- inspecting and objecting to errors in the voters' roll
- nominating for election

- early and postal voting (attendance)
- redirection of ballot packs (postal)
- replacement ballot packs (postal)
- details of how and when to vote on election day (attendance)
- the close of voting
- election results.

Based on previous experience, the VEC will also provide an application whereby users can search for their local government area based on their address. Many callers to the telephone enquiry service in the past have called for this information alone.

Results information will be published on the VEC website and will include first preference results, preference distribution results (including a downloadable preference distribution report, if required), and the names of elected candidates.

Links to translated electoral information, including telephone numbers for the multi-language interpreting service are included on each page of the VEC website by default.

The VEC will direct voters to the website by including its address in all newspaper and radio advertisements and any printed material produced, as well as by providing content to each council to assist the council to link its website directly to that council's election page on the VEC's website.

### **Optional components**

#### ***Reminder advertisement***

A final reminder for voters to cast their votes can be included upon request. This advertisement will be listed in the council's nominated local press and it will:

- remind voters of the hours of voting on election day (attendance elections) or the close of voting for postal elections
- list voting centre locations (attendance) or where ballot material can be hand delivered
- list early voting centres (attendance) or provide instructions on how and where to apply for a replacement postal vote for postal elections
- advise who has to vote
- include contact details for further information.



### **Multi-language leaflet for postal elections**

A leaflet supplied in a minimum of 20 high need languages (plus English) that explains, step-by-step, how to vote formally can be provided. It also includes telephone interpreter numbers for each language (plus the one general number for any other languages). See Appendix 7 for a list of proposed languages.

This product will be included as standard for all metropolitan council elections being held by postal voting and is strongly recommended for regional councils with high numbers of voters from non-English speaking backgrounds. Metropolitan councils that are having attendance elections will have multi-language voting instructions printed in every voting screen so the leaflet is not required.

## **Election Office and staff**

### **Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer and staff**

The VEC maintains a pool of trained senior election officials to ensure that suitable election staff are available for appointment as Returning Officers and Deputy Returning Officers for 79 local council elections. Each Returning Officer may appoint up to three Deputy Returning Officers, as determined by the VEC, depending on the size and complexity of their particular elections. All Returning Officers and Deputy Returning Officers appointed by VEC will have satisfactorily completed at least seven days training and 30 hours of home study prior to their appointment.

The majority of the VEC's senior election officials will have previous local government election experience, State Parliamentary election experience, or both. Recruitment for new senior election officials looks for transferable skills, such as project and people management, which the VEC uses to complement its election training program. Further training, specifically in local government elections is compulsory for all senior election officials before they can be appointed to a Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer role. The training program includes a comprehensive focus on the practical aspects of local government elections and the procedures that must be followed.

The Returning Officer will be authorised to appoint an optimum number of staff to ensure the cost-effective and successful conduct of their election.

A team of election support officers will be appointed to support Returning Officers during the election period. The team are the first point of contact for

Returning Officers for assistance and advice on legislative, procedural, and technical matters. All election support officers are experienced electoral practitioners.

### **Election office**

The location of election offices will be selected in consultation with each council. If a council does not have suitable space available for an election office within its own premises, the VEC will endeavour to source a site that is conveniently positioned for candidates and voters, and meets the VEC's accessibility and security standards.

Election offices will be clearly identified, with appropriate signage and security. The VEC will check all access points and, where necessary, arrange for new locks to be fitted.

The following table is provided as a guide of the floor space required when considering election office accommodation options. It is noted that more space is required for attendance elections, and the most suitable spaces for election offices have open floor plans without built in cubicles or multiple individual offices. All prospective election offices will be assessed by the VEC and must meet the strict standards for accessibility, security, and storage.

<b>Number of Voters</b>	<b>Recommended Office Space<sup>2</sup></b>
Up to 50,000	200–300 sq. m
50,001–70,000	300–400 sq. m
70,000–130,000	> 400 sq. m

For the 2016 local government elections, the VEC will require access to election offices during the beginning of July for the establishment of telecommunication services. This is earlier than for previous elections but is necessary to ensure sufficient time to respond to connectivity issues (such as limited line capacity or telephone/data network infrastructure issues).

The VEC will arrange the delivery of furniture and materials to election offices during August 2016. Election office computer systems will be installed and commissioned shortly after the delivery and connections have occurred.

Due to continuing development of the VEC's election management system, the cost efficiencies that once existed for centralising back-office

<sup>2</sup> Note this does not include secure storage space, which must be within or adjacent to the election office.

processes in regional areas no longer occur. The hub-satellite election office configuration that was used for previous local government elections has, for the 2016 program, been replaced by a commitment to single-office service delivery.

The VEC will arrange the collection of materials and equipment from election offices between Monday 31 October and Friday 18 November. Smaller election offices may be decommissioned earlier and the VEC will prioritise decommissioning of election offices located within council accommodation.

### **Ballot paper security**

An important focus of the VEC at the 2014 State election was the secure storage and transport of used and unused ballot papers. The VEC implemented a number of logistical and security procedures that included lockable storage areas for ballot papers, increased ballot paper accountability and reconciliation, and increased awareness of the safe and secure custody and transfer of ballot papers during the election timeline. The VEC will continue to develop these procedures which will apply for the 2016 local government elections.

The VEC will assess each proposed election office venue for its compliance with the security standards, and training for Returning Officers and Deputy Returning Officers will reinforce the VEC's stringent expectations. Where necessary, the VEC will install temporary secure storage for ballot papers, such as a secure 'site safe' or cage using steel fencing. Any physical modifications that are required to election offices to meet these requirements will be made in consultation with the council (for council provided election office accommodation) or the property manager/owner (for leased election office accommodation) and pursuant to any lease arrangements.

### **Furniture and equipment**

The VEC will provide the Returning Officer with a network of computers, photocopier/multi-function device, letter openers, ballot-paper counting machines, cardboard furniture and other furniture and equipment. These items present a modern corporate image to the community and have proved cost-effective for use over a limited period.

### **Computerised election management system**

The computerised election management system that is provided to the Returning Officer contains details of each individual election and the voters' rolls. Nominations, candidate statements (postal elections), how-to-vote cards (attendance elections)

early and postal votes and results are all entered by the Returning Officer directly into the computer application. This interfaces with systems at the VEC to produce the artwork for printing ballot papers, candidate statements and other products required for the election and to publish information directly onto the VEC's website.

### **Office hours**

Election offices will be open to the public from Wednesday 14 September until Friday 21 October. Election office opening hours will be standardised across the State and will operate from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm weekdays, except for the last two days before election day when election offices will close at 8.00 pm on Thursday 20 October and 6.00 pm on Friday 21 October. Standardised election office hours assists with providing consistent messages to voters through the advertising and communication campaign.

Election offices for attendance elections will not be open to the public on election day—but the election office will post a sign showing the nearest voting centre(s) to the election office's location.

### **Telephone enquiry service**

Returning Officers will provide a local telephone enquiry service to handle election enquiries during the election period. The service will operate during office hours. This will enable consistent statewide advertising messages. Telephone enquiry staff will be located in the election office and will be provided with access to look-up tools containing key details for the election.

The telephone service at the election office will be linked to the VEC's phone system. A dedicated team of operators at the VEC will answer any overflow calls from election offices when local telephone enquiry staff are fully occupied.

### **Candidates**

#### **Information session**

Returning Officers will conduct at least one information session for candidates prior to the close of nominations. The information session will cover the election timeline, the procedures and rules relevant to candidates (with particular emphasis on the rules regarding election advertising that are often the subject of complaints). Returning Officers will ensure that prospective candidates are aware that the VEC is responsible for the conduct of the election and that election enquiries should be directed to the election office, not council staff.

Returning Officers will be equipped with candidate kits for prospective candidates, which will contain a handbook and any forms relevant to candidature.

In consultation with the contract manager, councils can advise where additional candidate information sessions may be required, particularly in local government areas with multiple major towns.

### **Nominations**

The Returning Officer will receive and record nominations from candidates, including the receipt of the \$250 nomination fee.

Prospective candidates will be encouraged to complete their nomination form using the VEC's online candidate helper, which allows candidates to print a populated nomination form containing a unique identifier for easy lodgement with the Returning Officer. Nomination forms completed using the online candidate helper must still be lodged in person, but the nomination process will be more efficient for candidates when they visit the election office. The unique identifier printed on nomination forms prepared using the online candidate helper allows Returning Officers to retrieve the candidate's data and load it directly into the VEC's election management system.

In all cases, candidates will be required to quality assure their nomination information and Returning Officers will carefully run through the candidate declaration before the declaration is completed.

The list of candidates who have nominated for each local council election will be updated on the VEC's website regularly so that candidates' names and public contact details, where provided, will appear soon after a full quality assurance process has been completed for their nomination. The VEC anticipates updates to the lists of candidates on the VEC website to be made at approximately 10.00 am and 5.00 pm on each day during the nomination period, and the final list of candidates as soon as possible after the close of nominations.

### **Draw for ballot paper position**

Returning Officers will hold a ballot draw to determine the order that candidates' names will appear on the ballot paper as soon as practicable after the close of nominations.

Ballot draws will be conducted electronically with the order of names on the ballot paper determined by a computerised random draw. Electronic draws have been used for State elections since 1999 and for local government elections since 2008.

The VEC's electronic application has been independently audited to ensure the result is random. Electronic ballot draws create significant efficiencies, reducing the time between the draws and dispatching ballot paper files to the printer, and reduces the risk and time involved with manual data entry of ballot draw results. The electronic draw also enables the publication of the final list of candidates, in ballot paper order, to be updated to the VEC's website by 5.00 pm after the close of nominations.

### **Candidate statements and indication of preferences (postal elections)**

Returning Officers for postal elections will receive candidates' personal statements, photographs and indications of preferences. Prospective candidates will also be able to complete the forms to lodge their personal statements and indication of preferences using the VEC's online candidate helper. This will enable candidates to print their statement and/or indication of preferences ready for lodgement with the Returning Officer. Again, this will streamline the process for candidates at the election office and allow Returning Officers to load the statement directly into the VEC's election management system. Candidates, or their authorised representative, will be required to quality assure the information entered into the VEC's election management system.

The candidate handbook will provide clear information on the requirements for preparing and submitting statements, photographs and indications of preferences. Returning Officers will not assist candidates with the preparation of their statement content.

### **How-to-vote cards (attendance elections)**

Returning Officers for attendance elections will process all how-to-vote cards submitted for registration. The VEC's head office Candidate Services Team will be available to Returning Officers to provide advice on how-to-vote card matters, as required.

Detailed information on the requirements for how-to-vote card registration will be contained in the candidate handbook.

### **Candidate enquiries**

The Returning Officer will deal personally with all enquiries from candidates to ensure that authoritative and consistent information is being provided.

### **Refund of Nomination Deposits**

Candidates who receive 4% or more of the formal first preference vote, or who are elected, will have their nomination fee refunded as soon as practicable after the declaration of the election.

The VEC anticipates that cheques will be sent to eligible candidates during November. Cheques for deposits forfeited by candidates who are ineligible to have their nomination fee returned will be sent to local councils at the same time.

### **Ballot material**

VEC employees will supervise all stages in the preparation, printing and assembly of ballot material.

Considerable time will be devoted to the recruitment and training of quality assurance staff to oversee the preparation of ballot material for attendance and postal elections.

### **Postal elections**

As stated previously, the timeline for the preparation of ballot packs is critical. The VEC has developed a strategy to manage the preparation of an estimated 3.8 million plus ballot packs. Some of the time saving elements of this strategy have already been discussed in the previous section. Further strategies are discussed below. The VEC will establish a service level agreement with Australia Post for the provision of postal facilities and services for the 2016 local government elections. Discussion will be held with security printers and mailhouse to ensure that coordination between VEC, printer, mailhouse and Australia Post is as effective as possible. The VEC will also review the information contained in the ballot packs to ensure that it is as clear as possible to voters.

#### ***Ballot paper and candidate statements leaflet***

The ballot papers will be printed with a background security screen using a different colour for each ward.

The ballot papers will be printed as a combined product with the candidates' statements to minimise the risk of any errors occurring when the products are mechanically inserted into ballot packs at the mailhouse. The ballot papers will have a perforation along the edge that joins the candidates' statements. The voter will detach the ballot paper before marking their vote.

A four colour printing process will be used for printing ballot papers. The use of the four colour

printing process increases productivity and allows printing to commence shortly after the print ready files have been provided to the printer.

#### ***Reply-paid and outer envelopes***

The VEC will establish a unique reply paid number for each ward in the municipality and each unsubdivided council. The reply-paid envelope will feature coloured thumb prints (matching the colour of the ballot paper) in the left hand corner of the envelope. This facilitates pre-sorting of the envelopes to wards by Australia Post and maximises the accuracy of the sorting. The outer envelope is a window-faced envelope with a distinct marker to ensure voters easily recognise that the envelope contains official election material.

All outer envelope stock containing ballot material will show the Australia Post "PRIORITY" indicator for priority service delivery.

#### ***Ballot paper envelopes***

The ballot paper envelopes have been specially designed for use at local government elections conducted by post and conform with the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2005.

The envelopes are designed so that their contents are not visible through the security lining and the declaration flap can be separated from the envelope by election officials before the ballot paper is extracted.

#### ***Multi-language leaflets***

The multi-language leaflet (see page 11) will be included in the postal ballot pack as standard for all metropolitan councils using postal voting. The product is also encouraged for any other local councils using postal voting that have a high number of voters from non-English speaking backgrounds.

#### ***Addressing of ballot packs***

The VEC contracted mailhouse will direct print the voters' addresses (mailing and entitlement address) and barcodes on the ballot-paper envelopes. The mailhouse will utilise intelligent inkjet printing to direct print to envelopes.

#### ***Assembly and delivery of ballot packs***

The mailhouse contracted by the VEC will assemble ballot packs for all postal elections. The mailhouse will lodge the ballot packs with Australia Post over three days, with no more than 35% of any ward of a municipality or unsubdivided council lodged on any one day in accordance with the legislation. The mailhouse used by the VEC has allocated a secure

area within their operations that will be used solely for the printing, insertion and dispatch of ballot material to ensure the highest standards in security are met.

Ballot packs for postal elections will be lodged with Australia Post under the priority delivery timetable. Australia Post has undertaken to deliver each day's lodgement of ballot packs to voters in accordance with their priority mail guidelines.

#### ***Redirection of ballot material***

Voters are able to apply to have their ballot material redirected to an address other than their entitlement address. Voters have until the certification day for the voters' roll (also the day that nominations open) apply for their ballot material to be redirected. The VEC will arrange for ballot material to be delivered to any voter applying for redirection to the address specified in their request.

#### ***Replacement ballot material***

Any voters who contact Returning Officers claiming to have lost or spoilt their ballot material, or who claim not to have received a ballot pack, will be issued with replacement ballot material. Returning Officers are able to monitor the issue and return of replacement ballot material through the VEC's election management system to ensure that no voter is able to have more than one ballot paper admitted to the count.

#### ***Return of ballot paper envelopes***

Ballot paper envelopes will be returned to the election office through the allocated Australia Post facility, pre-sorted by the reply paid number corresponding to each ward or unsubdivided council.

Returning Officers will ensure daily reconciliation of mail received and supervise the scanning of ballot paper envelopes through the VEC's election management system to record their return.

Ballot paper envelopes will then be batched in 50s (for balancing at scrutiny), sealed in security boxes and stored in a secure location until after the close of voting.

#### ***Security of ballot material***

Interfering with ballot material is a serious offence managed under sections 58 and 58A of the Act and those found guilty of committing such an offence are liable for a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years or a fine not exceeding 240 penalty units.

As discussed early in this election service plan, the VEC will implement a number of measures for the

security and storage of ballot material at election offices, voting centres and early voting centres (for attendance elections), and extraction and counting venues (if different). These measures are in addition to tightened accountability and reconciliation procedures governing the custody and transfer of ballot material.

### **Attendance elections**

#### ***Ballot papers***

Ballot papers for attendance elections will also be printed with a background security screen using a different colour for each ward.

#### ***Multi-language voting instructions***

Voting instructions in 20 languages other than English will be pre-printed in voting compartments at voting centres. A list of the 20 languages is included in Appendix 7.

### **Early voting**

#### **Postal elections**

Where special circumstances apply, Returning Officers will issue ballot papers to the voters concerned prior to the general mail-out of ballot packs. Voters in this category can apply to the Returning Officer by phone or in person during standard office hours.

#### **Attendance elections**

##### ***Postal voting***

Any voters wishing to vote by post before election day may apply in writing to the Returning Officer. Applications will be available from the Returning Officer and on the VEC website. The Returning Officer will post to each applicant a ballot paper, voting instructions, a postal vote envelope and a reply-paid return addressed envelope.

Returning Officers for attendance elections will arrange for ballot material to be posted to all voters who are registered as general postal voters for State elections as soon as ballot material is available following the close of nominations.

##### ***Early voting (in person)***

Returning Officers will provide early voting facilities at the election office from Wednesday 21 September to Friday 21 October. During this period, early voting will operate from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday, except for Thursday 20 October (9.00 am to 8.00 pm) and Friday 21 October (9.00 am to 6.00 pm). This aims to avoid confusion for

voters by ensuring consistency across all offices (postal and attendance) during the voting period and on the last day of early voting.

In consultation with local councils, the VEC may provide early voting facilities at additional venues during the early voting period. The VEC proposes that the hours of operation be consistent across all venues, and that venues be identified by Monday 18 July to assist with the production of advertising and communication products. Councils should consider the increase in early voting numbers over recent elections when considering additional early voting arrangements.

The VEC will provide all furniture and equipment necessary for the operation of the early voting locations.

## **Voting centres (for attendance elections only)**

### **Accessibility**

The accessibility standards of voting centres are a high priority for attendance elections. The VEC will look for voting centres that provide maximum access for voters and will attempt to ensure at least one fully accessible voting centre is available in each ward. Where access limitations exist for voting centres, the VEC will provide an explanation of the limitations associated with each voting centre rated as having no wheelchair access (NWA) or assisted wheelchair access (AWA).

Similarly, councils using the attendance method of voting should ensure that every effort is made to maximise access to the nominated voting centres for voters living with a disability. The VEC will recover any costs associated with matters raised by voters or disability organisations because of access deficiencies to voting centres or additional early voting centres. These matters expressly include issues raised with the relevant Federal or State human rights bodies.

### **Selection of voting centres**

The VEC will prepare a proposed list of voting centres for each local council using the attendance method of voting in early 2016.

In doing so, the VEC will consider voting centres that have been used at State, Federal and previous local government elections, and will ensure that voting centres are suitably located within each ward or local government area. Wherever possible, voting centres that are too close to ward boundaries will be avoided

Proposed voting centre locations for attendance elections will be identified as early as possible so that venue bookings can be made. Through the contract manager, the VEC will provide the list of recommended voting centres to each council for information, but Returning Officers will make the final decision regarding the appointment of voting centres. The VEC's head office team will work closely with Returning Officers as they formally appoint voting centres.

Voting centre locations should be finalised by the end of April 2016 to assist with resourcing and the preparation of communication products.

The VEC will cancel bookings for voting centres in wards that are uncontested after the close of nominations unless there are satisfactory reasons for the voting centre to remain. Voting centres that are located near the border with a contested ward or those that are conveniently located for the whole local government area may be kept.

### **Voting centre equipment**

The VEC will arrange for the delivery of voting centre furniture (where required) and equipment to each voting centre during the week before election day. This will include the customised cardboard voting centre equipment (i.e. voting screens, directional signs, ballot boxes).

### **Operation of voting centres**

Election day voting centres will operate between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm on Saturday 22 October 2016.

Returning Officers for attendance elections will appoint and train voting centre managers. Training and reference material will explain the strict legal requirement that apply to voting at attendance local government elections.

Regulations require that voting facilities for all voters in a local government area must be made available at any voting centre within the municipality regardless of the ward for which the voter is enrolled. This means that there is no longer a requirement to specifically appoint voting centres close to ward boundaries as 'joint voting centres'.

The VEC will provide an electronic roll mark off facility at all voting centres that will allow voters to be marked off a municipal-wide roll at any voting centre for the local council. Hard copy rolls would only be used in the event of a connection failure at a voting centre.

## Voting centre staff

Returning Officers for attendance elections will appoint the optimum staff for each voting centre to provide a smooth flow of voters on election day.

The Returning Officer will also appoint sufficient liaison officers to visit voting centres during the hours of voting and throughout the count on election day to support all voting centre managers. They will check procedures are being carried out correctly, provide advice where necessary and deliver any additional materials if shortages occur during the day.

## Voter notice (*EasyVote* letter)

The *EasyVote* letter (see page 10) will be dispatched to voters enrolled for attendance elections by the VEC on behalf of the Returning Officer shortly after the close of nominations.

## Counting methods

The counting methods that apply for local government elections include:

- Preferential counts**  
 Preferential counts are used for single vacancies at postal and attendance elections. All preferential counts, except for the City of Greater Geelong Mayoral and City of Melbourne leadership team elections, will be counted manually.
- Proportional representation (PR) counts**  
 Proportional representation is used to calculate the result in wards involving multiple vacancies or unsubdivided municipalities at postal and attendance elections. The VEC anticipates conducting all PR counts using its computer count application.

## Computer counts

At the 2012 local government elections, the VEC established 65 sites for computerised counts for 68 local councils involving multiple vacancies and the City of Greater Geelong Mayoral and City of Melbourne leadership team elections.

The VEC's computer count application allows it to be more transportable and therefore establish computer count venues within all municipalities where the results will be determined by computer.

The VEC will, as far as possible, utilise TAFE colleges and schools for the conduct of computer counts to enable the VEC to utilise existing

computer labs, though it should be noted that it is becoming difficult to source computer labs at educational institutions and alternative arrangements may need to be considered. Additionally, due to the timing of the local government elections in October, these facilities are less available during the school term. Where a computer counting venue is not available within a municipality, it may be necessary to conduct computer counts for more than one municipality at a centralised count centre. The VEC will consult with councils where this may be a possibility.

During a computer count, preferences on each ballot paper are entered into the VEC's computer count application by experienced data entry operators. Once all ballot papers have been entered, Returning Officers will apply a function within the application to calculate a result.

## Manual counts

For elections involving single vacancies, Returning Officers will conduct a manual count at the election office or at a venue within the municipality to be provided by council or at cost to council. The area required for manual counting is approximately 40 square metres per 10,000 voters. This ratio also applies the space required for the extraction of ballot papers from ballot paper envelopes at postal elections.

## Postal election timeline—close of voting to final result

### POSTAL ELECTIONS—FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER (FROM 6.00 PM)

The Returning Officer will complete processing of all replacement votes received in the election office by the close of voting and generate a report to identify any envelopes where original ballot pack and replacement packs appear to have been returned for the same voter.

The relevant ballot paper envelopes are located and dealt with by Returning Officers in accordance with procedures specified in Regulations. No extraction can take place until these processes are complete.

A balance figure is established for each ward in preparation for the extraction of ballot papers.

### Checking unenrolled declarations

Declarations made by unenrolled voters will be checked progressively during the voting period and completed on Friday 21 October. Returning Officers will require access to an authorised council officer

to assist with determining the entitlement of unenrolled declarations.

## **POSTAL ELECTIONS—SATURDAY 22 OCTOBER**

Teams of counting staff will remove the flaps containing the voter details from the ballot paper envelopes to be included in the count, open the ballot paper envelopes and extract the ballot papers in the presence of any scrutineers. The ballot papers are tallied to ensure that all ballot papers have been extracted from the envelopes.

Additional accommodation may be required for the opening, extraction and counting of ballot papers.

### **Manual counts**

Where the count is to be conducted manually, ballot papers are then sorted to first preferences and informal, and counted to give first-preference results.

It is expected that the extraction and sort to first preferences for larger councils may extend into Sunday 23 October.

### **Computer counts**

Where the count is to be conducted by computer, ballot papers are batched into 50s in preparation for data entry. Any informal ballot papers will be identified during data entry. It is expected that batching would be completed on Saturday afternoon. Ballot paper batches will then be sealed and secured for transport to the computer count venue.

The VEC will establish the computer infrastructure required for the conduct of the computer counts at each of the identified computer count venues. Some venues may have the space and facilities to conduct simultaneous counts across two or more rooms.

## **POSTAL ELECTIONS—SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER**

### **Manual counts (preferential)**

Where no candidate receives an absolute majority of first preference results, a preference distribution will take place.

The Returning Officer will appoint sufficient experienced staff to form one or more counting teams to distribute preferences. The number of teams required will depend on the number of preference counts to be conducted. A trained

election official will be appointed as team leader for each counting team.

Manual distributions for preferential counts could extend to Monday 24 October for larger councils.

Results for manual preferential counts will be displayed on the VEC's website at the completion of first preference counts for each ward, and then again if a preference distribution is required, at the end of the distribution.

### **Computer counts**

The number of data entry operators required for each computer count venue will be determined after nominations close. Data entry operators will be supervised by trained computer count team leaders and a number of trained computer count supervisors for each count team at each venue.

The timetable for data entry of ballot papers for each election will be determined after the close of nominations when the number of candidates and uncontested elections is known.

Based on the current expected number of computer counts, the VEC expects that up to 40 hours of data entry will be required to complete all computer counts, with computer counts running simultaneously across all computer count venues.

Where required the VEC will run multiple shifts each day, for each team at each venue until all computer counts are complete for that venue. A fresh team, including team leaders, supervisors and data entry operators will operate each shift.

Data entry may commence for some computer counts on Saturday 22 October but it is anticipated that most larger counts will not commence data entry until Sunday 23 October at the earliest. It is expected that all computer counts will be completed by Friday 28 October, at the latest. Candidates and councils will be advised on the proposed counting timetable after the close of nominations.

Team leaders will establish an area within each computer count venue to allow their Returning Officer to recheck all informal ballot papers. Ballot papers initially deemed to be informal that are later confirmed as formal will be returned to data entry.

Results will be calculated for each council at the completion of data entry for all wards in that council. Distribution reports that detail the count will be distributed as soon as possible after the completion of each result calculation. Results will be displayed on the VEC website as soon as possible after the completion of all counts for a particular council.



## Attendance election timeline— close of voting to final result

### ATTENDANCE ELECTIONS—SATURDAY 22 OCTOBER

#### Count of ballot papers at voting centres

Voting centre staff will commence the count of first preferences and informal votes following the close of voting. The results will be communicated immediately to the Returning Officer after counting is completed. Ballot papers will be sealed in security boxes at the voting centres and returned to the election office on election night.

#### Count of postal and early votes

Preliminary scrutiny of postal votes (signature checks) will take place in the election office and the count of postal and early votes will take place in the election office from 6.00 pm on election night.

### ATTENDANCE ELECTIONS—SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER

#### Checking unenrolled declarations

The VEC is proposing to commence this process for the 2016 local government elections at 8.00 am on Sunday 23 October.

Trained VEC staff will attend each attendance election office to check unenrolled declarations. VEC staff will have access to the State electoral register for this purpose.

Once checked against the enrolment register, the Returning Officer will deliver declarations for further checking against the CEO list to an authorised council officer. Returning Officers will need access to an authorised council officer from 8.30 am on Sunday 23 October for this purpose.

#### Count of absent and unenrolled votes

Absent votes from each voting centre will be reconciled and amalgamated by ward in the election office on Sunday morning, then counted. Unenrolled votes will also be counted after the checking of entitlement has been completed.

#### Manual Preference Distributions (preferential counts)

Where no candidate receives an absolute majority of first preference votes following the counting on election night, a preference distribution must be conducted.

Prior to commencing a preference count, all first preference ballot papers must be fully rechecked for formality, correct sorting and counting. Rechecks will take place on Sunday morning. Some preference distributions for smaller councils will commence on Sunday afternoon, but most will begin at 9.00 am on Monday morning and it is expected that all will be completed on that day.

Results for manual preferential counts will be displayed on the VEC's website at the completion of first preference counts for each ward, then again if a preference distribution is required, at the end of the distribution.

#### Computer Counts (proportional representation)

For the 2016 computer counts for attendance elections the VEC will batch ballot papers by voting centre or parcel of votes to enable reconciliation throughout the count process. Ballot papers within each parcel of votes will be batched into 50s in preparation for data entry (a short batch may be required where the number of ballot papers for a particular parcel are not divisible by 50). Any obvious informal ballot papers are removed during this process, other informal ballot papers will be identified during data entry. It is expected that batching would be completed on Sunday afternoon. Ballot paper batches will then be sealed and secured for transport to the computer count venue.

The VEC will establish the computer infrastructure required for the conduct of the computer counts at each of the identified computer count venues. Some venues may have the space and facilities to conduct simultaneous counts across two or more rooms.

The number of data entry operators required for each computer count site will be determined after nominations close. Data entry operators will be supervised by trained computer count team leaders and a number of trained computer count supervisors for each count team at each venue.

The timetable for data entry of ballot papers for each election will be determined after the close of nominations when the number of candidates and uncontested elections is known.

Based on the current expected number of computer counts, the VEC expects that up to 40 hours of data entry will be required to complete all computer counts, with computer counts running simultaneously across all computer count venues.

Where required the VEC will run multiple shifts each day, for each team at each venue until all computer

counts are complete for that venue. A fresh team, including team leaders, supervisors and data entry operators will operate each shift.

It is anticipated that data entry will not commence until Monday 24 October, at the earliest. It is expected that all computer counts will be completed by Friday 28 October, at the latest. Candidates and councils will be advised on the proposed counting timetable after the close of nominations.

Team leaders will establish an area within the computer count venue to allow their Returning Officer to recheck all informal ballot papers. Ballot papers initially deemed to be informal that are later confirmed as formal will be returned for data entry to the same voting centre or parcel of votes.

Results will be calculated for each council at the completion of data entry for all wards in that council. Distribution reports that detail the count will be distributed as soon as possible after the completion of each result calculation. Results will be displayed on the VEC website as soon as possible after the completion of all counts for a particular council.

## Declaration of the result

It is expected that VEC Returning Officers will complete all declarations by Friday 28 October. This will be in line with the 2012 elections.

Following the completion of the VEC's electoral representation review program in April 2016, the VEC will be in a better position to provide councils with a broad estimate of their proposed counting plan. A more accurate estimate will be provided after the close of nominations when the dimensions of each count are known.

The VEC advises Returning Officers to allow a minimum of two hours between the completion of a manual count and the conduct of the declaration. For computerised PR counts, a minimum of two hours should be allowed between the completion of the count and the declaration for small counts, and a minimum of four hours for larger counts. This allows reasonable time for candidates to consider distribution reports and decide if they wish to request a recount. Returning Officers will advise candidates at the completion of the count if the proposed declaration time needs to be extended to allow for this requirement. Once the declaration takes place, the only avenue to request a recount is by application to the MET.

## Management of complaints

Complaint management is an important component of conducting an election. Many complainants consider that proving a breach of the Act will lead to an election result being overturned by a Court process.

Complaints generally fall into two categories:

If the complaint relates to:

1. **the administration of the election —**  
The Electoral Commissioner will respond on behalf of the Returning Officer.
2. **a possible breach of the Act —**  
investigation and response to these complaints is the responsibility of the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate. The VEC will refer the complaint directly to the Inspectorate for a response and copy the complainant of this action.

The VEC will provide specific information regarding the management of complaints in the candidate handbook. This will include the different responsibilities of the Returning Officer and the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate.

A high proportion of the complaints received during local government elections allege the distribution of misleading or unauthorised electoral material. A number of these are often escalated by complainants to the MET. Previous decisions by the MET have been dismissed as the courts have been specifically concerned with material likely to mislead or deceive voters in relation to the casting of the vote. This is a very narrow definition in comparison to what many candidates generally consider to be misleading.

The VEC will include further information in its handbook for candidates, the pre-election series booklet and candidate information sessions, in an attempt to have candidates better understand what is considered to be misleading under the Act.

Based on previous experience, the VEC expects up to 400 complaints to be received for the 2016 elections. It would be expected that of 400 complaints, up to 250 will relate to alleged offences against the Act and in the main relate to authorisation of election material, and material that is considered to be misleading.

## Election report and storage of material

The VEC will provide council with a report on the conduct of the elections within three months of election day as required by legislation.

After the declaration of election(s), Returning Officers will package all ballot papers together with all other materials used at the election in sealed security boxes. The boxes will be clearly labelled to indicate contents, the ward and the date of the election.

The Returning Officer will deliver all sealed parcels containing the prescribed election material to the Chief Executive Officer for safe and secret storage. Where computer counts have been conducted, this will include a CD of the ballot paper data to be kept secure until such time as it may be required for the conduct of a countback. The VEC recommends that these CDs are stored in a safe or secure area within the governance, records or Chief Executive Officer's areas at council for safekeeping until required for the conduct of a countback.

## Management of MET inquiries and VCAT reviews

Section 45 of the Act allows a candidate, or a party of 10 voters, to dispute the validity of a local council election through an application to the MET.

MET decisions are subject to review through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Following the 2012 local government elections, five applications were lodged with the MET and there were no applications for review by the VCAT.

The cost of the VEC's involvement in these inquiries was shared between the VEC and the particular council as a contingency cost under the electoral service agreement. Comprehensive reporting during the MET inquiry and in relation to the recovery of cost was provided to each council.

In developing its cost recovery model for MET inquiries, the VEC notes that not all cases impugn the VEC or the Returning Officer. Nevertheless, the VEC is named as a party to the application. Where the VEC is not directly impugned, the VEC may request or be invited by the MET to remain *amicus curiae* (a friend of the court). In all inquiries at the 2012 local government elections, however, the MET required the VEC to continue to be a party to the application, even when the VEC was not directly associated with the claims made by the applicant.

The VEC will continue to recover costs associated with responding to a MET inquiry on a shared basis with the council involved. The VEC will not recover the cost if it is found by the MET to be at fault, and may absorb a portion of the costs associated with responding to a MET inquiry where there is an opportunity for building electoral knowledge.

In circumstances where the VEC is involved in a MET hearing or VCAT review, the VEC will generally be represented by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO). The VEC may engage outside counsel through the VGSO, or in addition or instead of working with the VGSO.

## Insurances

Local councils have previously required election service contractors to maintain professional indemnity insurance. This insurance was held by the VEC prior to the 2012 local government elections solely for the purpose of meeting contract requirements with the local government sector. At a cost of approximately \$75,000 per annum, this cost was passed on to local councils through the VEC's cost recovery program. In consultation with the Municipal Association of Victoria, professional indemnity insurance was discontinued as a cost saving measure given the relatively low likelihood of claims against the policy and the maximum size of possible claims.

In the event that a re-election is required as a result of an error or action by the VEC or the Returning Officer, the VEC will meet the cost of a new election.

In relation to other insurances maintained for local government elections, the VEC will recover a proportion of the cost from local councils. The VEC has recently reviewed its insurance arrangements, resulting in significant premium reductions. These savings will be passed on to local councils.

## 6. Compulsory voting enforcement

The *Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Act 2015* will require the VEC to carry out compulsory voting enforcement for all councils at the 2016 local government elections. The Act has also been amended to include prosecution of non-voters who do not satisfactorily respond during the enforcement process.

This process is not new to the VEC as compulsory voting requirements also apply at Victorian State elections. As a result, the VEC is equipped with the systems that allow it to manage non-voter follow through to, and including, prosecution. For most councils in Victoria, it is only compulsory for voters on the EC list for an election to vote at that election.

### List of non-voters

Regulation 116 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2005 currently detail the requirements for the list of non-voters. Given new regulations will be in place for the 2016 local government elections, the VEC will prepare the list of non-voters in accordance with the new regulations. This includes the exclusion of any non-voters who are automatically exempt from compulsory voting.

### Compulsory voting enforcement

The VEC is obliged to enforce the compulsory voting provisions of the Act at the 2016 local government elections. The VEC's enforcement program will involve three stages. During each stage of the process, the VEC will update each council and provide statistical information regarding the number of apparent failure to vote notices issued, apparent non-voters who have replied, paid the fine, been excused, not been excused or not replied to the notice, and the number of infringements referred to the Infringements Court by the VEC.

### Enforcement process

The VEC will commence its compulsory voting enforcement program in early January 2017. The first step in the process is a requirement of the Act (or the *City of Melbourne Act 2001* for City of Melbourne elections) and the remaining steps are

relevant to provisions of the *Infringements Act 2006*. The process is as follows:

#### Apparent Failure-to-vote Notice

The VEC will prepare and send an apparent failure to vote notice to all voters who appear to have failed to vote and are not automatically exempt. The VEC anticipates being in a position to dispatch these notices in early January 2017.

#### Infringement Notice

The VEC will prepare and send an infringement notice to any apparent non-voter whose excuse is not deemed sufficient or who failed to reply to the apparent failure to vote notice. A penalty applies to this notice and will be collected on behalf of council.

During the processing of responses it is a requirement of legislation that non-voters who provide a sufficient response for not voting may have the infringement against them withdrawn. A 'Withdrawal of Infringement' letter must be mailed to each non-voter in this category. This will be an additional cost to councils.

#### Penalty Reminder Notice

The VEC will prepare and send a Penalty Reminder Notice to those apparent non-voters who have not paid the penalty for failing to vote. A penalty plus prescribed costs applies to this notice and will be collected on behalf of council.

'Withdrawal of Infringement' letters must be mailed to each non-voter in this category. This will be an additional cost to councils.

#### Lodgement with the courts

At the end of the Infringement Notice and Penalty Reminder Notice periods, the VEC will commence proceedings against any non-voters who respond to the notice and requested for the matter to be heard in the Magistrates' Court.

The VEC will also collate any outstanding infringements following the notices into a final court file and lodge the file with the Infringements Court for prosecution within the legislated deadlines.

Prosecution of non-voters at the Infringements and Magistrates' Courts involve significant time and resources. Matters referred to the Courts may not

be resolved until well after the completion of the notice period, and can be expected to continue into subsequent financial years (i.e. beyond 2016-17).

## **Receipt of penalties**

The VEC will receive and record all payments made in relation to compulsory voting enforcement on behalf of council. Council will be provided with the penalties received from voters at an agreed time.

At the completion of the process, the VEC will close the BPay and Post BillPay accounts so that further payments cannot be made by electronic means.

## 7. Costs

The VEC is conscious of providing a cost-efficient election service to the local government sector and will work to minimise costs wherever possible.

Since 2012, inflationary pressures have increased some of the VEC's costs and this is taken into account as the VEC begins to prepare cost estimates for the 2016 local government elections. Significant unit price cost increases have occurred with:

- Communication and advertising costs, particularly in relation to major daily newspapers and the shift to magazine layout for some local publications
- Australia Post postage rates
- Rates of pay for senior election officials, election staff, which are linked to rates in the Victorian Public Service enterprise agreement
- Market rent for election office and early voting centre accommodation
- Paper for the production of ballot material
- Transport and logistics in relation to the movement and delivery of equipment and ballot material, particularly courier costs and freight
- Travel costs, particularly in relation to the cost of fuel (reflected in the per kilometre mileage allowance rate)

The VEC will continue to apply a marginal cost recovery model where all direct costs are recovered. These costs include personnel and associated on-costs, stationery and material, equipment, mail processes, advertising and communications, printing, rent and utilities, insurances, IT infrastructure, and licences are costed to the election. The VEC's cost recovery model includes only those head office/administrative costs associated with contractors that are specifically employed for the local government election program.

The VEC does not recover salaries for core staff working on local government elections and overheads, such as head office and VEC warehouse accommodation. Some marginal costs are also not recovered because the VEC would be incurring the cost regardless of local government elections (i.e. depreciation of VEC equipment and materials).

### Contingency costs

There are a number of contingency costs that will also be included in the VEC's costing program on a fee-for-service arrangement. In some cases, it is not possible to estimate the cost and provision for contingency services which need to be factored into the electoral service agreement.

Examples of the contingency costs include responding to a MET inquiry (as discussed earlier in this election service plan) and the prosecution of non-voters through the Victorian court system, including the Infringements and Magistrates' Courts, where applicable. There are also a number of other unanticipated costs that may arise during the election timeline where a council requires a variation to the established parameters for the election (i.e. access to suitable election office, extraction, counting, voting centre and early voting accommodation, where applicable).

In all cases, the VEC's Contract Management Team will discuss contingency costs with the contact officers at councils affected.

# Appendix 1:

## Summary of initiatives and key changes

The following table summarises initiatives and key changes to the election services offered by the VEC at previous elections.

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Ballot paper security</b></p> <p>At the 2014 Victorian State election, the VEC implemented a number of additional assurance measures under the principle of protecting and maintaining the sanctity of every ballot paper throughout its lifecycle. The VEC is committed to implementing these measures across its entire election program, including local government elections.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Single office service delivery</b></p> <p>Significant development of the VEC's election management system since 2012 means that the management of local government elections can now be even more <i>local</i>. The economies of scale and efficiencies that were only possible through co-locating back-office processing at election offices for rural and regional councils no longer exist. As a result, the VEC has committed to rolling out single office service delivery for the 2016 local government elections.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Online enrolment for State electors</b></p> <p>The VEC has developed an online enrolment facility to allow State electors to enrol to vote and update their enrolment details through the VEC website. The VEC has also continued its progressive implementation of the direct enrolment programs working with key partners, such as VicRoads and the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA). The delivery of increased online services for electors has not only resulted in a more accurate and up to date electoral roll, but it's now more accessible and easier than ever for State electors to update their enrolment.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Improved security of transferring roll data between local councils and the VEC</b></p> <p>The VEC has recently implemented a new online facility for the secure exchange of roll data between local councils and the VEC. All councils will be provided with a user account to the VEC's web-based data exchange server, which will enable the secure uploading and downloading of data and reports. The server complies with all relevant privacy and data protection legislation and guidelines, and will greatly reduce the risk of privacy breaches during the exchange of highly sensitive roll data. As a result of the new facility, the transfer of roll data between the VEC and our local government partners will also be more convenient and timely, particularly during the short periods to process roll information in the election timeline.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Centralised computer count venues</b></p> <p>Local computer count venues are becoming an increasingly scarce resource for local government elections. The change in the election date from the end of November to the fourth week of October has meant that computer facilities at university campuses, TAFEs, and schools are still being used for teaching and examinations, and many schools are moving to more mobile technology.</p> <p>Where a local computer count venue is unavailable and no affordable alternatives can be identified, even after consulting with council officers, the VEC has prepared a comprehensive contingency plan to establish centralised computer count venues. Centralised venues will be able to process data entry for a number of local council elections without compromising the timeline for getting a result.</p> <p>Centralised computer count venues will also provide greater economies of scale through shared equipment, personnel and support costs.</p>

## Appendix 2: Local government election timelines

### Attendance election timeline

Council primary enrolment data	JUL 11	MON	(Date to be fixed by Registrar)
Public Notice of Entitlement Date Published during this period	AUG 3	WED	
	AUG 9	TUE	
Entitlement Date	AUG 26	FRI	(57 days before Election Day) 4pm
Publication of Election Notice Published during this period	AUG 29	MON	
	SEP 3	SAT	
<b>Opening of Election Office</b>	SEP 14	WED	
Certification of Voters Roll Opening of Nominations	SEP 15	THU	
Nomination Day	SEP 20	TUE	Closes 12 noon Ballot draw to follow
Commence Postal and Early Voting First day for Registration of How-to-Vote cards	SEP 21	WED	
Mailout <i>EasyVote</i> letter	OCT 7	FRI	
Last day for Registration of How-to-Vote cards	OCT 14	FRI	Closes 12 Noon
Close of Postal Voting Application	OCT 20	THU	Closes 12 Noon
Close of Early Voting	OCT 21	FRI	
<b>ELECTION DAY</b>	OCT 22	SAT	Voting Closes 6 pm
	OCT 23	SUN	Counting

Results declared between Sunday 23 October and Friday 28 October.



**Postal election timeline**

Council primary enrolment data	JUL 11	<b>MON</b>	(Date to be fixed by Registrar)
Public Notice of Entitlement Date Published during this period	AUG 3	<b>WED</b>	
	AUG 9	<b>TUE</b>	
Entitlement Date	AUG 26	<b>FRI</b>	(57 days before Election Day) 4pm
Publication of Election Notice Published during this period	AUG 29	<b>MON</b>	
	SEP 3	<b>SAT</b>	
<b>Opening of Election Office</b>	SEP 14	<b>WED</b>	
Certification of Voters' Roll Opening of Nominations	SEP 15	<b>THU</b>	
Nomination Day	SEP 20	<b>TUE</b>	Closes 12 noon Ballot draw to follow
Lodgement of Candidates' Statements and photographs	SEP 21	<b>WED</b>	Candidate Statements and photos Close 12 noon
Indications of Preferences	SEP 23	<b>FRI</b>	Preferences Close 12 noon
Mail-out of Ballot Packs/ Uncontested Ward Leaflets	OCT 4	<b>TUE</b>	
	OCT 5	<b>WED</b>	
	OCT 6	<b>THU</b>	
<b>CLOSE OF VOTING</b>	OCT 21	<b>FRI</b>	Voting Closes 6 pm
Election Day	OCT 22	<b>SAT</b>	

Results declared between Sunday 23 October and Friday 28 October.

## Appendix 3: Key dates for voters' roll production in 2016

Green shaded items are council actions.

Note that the VEC expects date of birth on at least 80% of council CEO list records.

Task	Key Dates
<b>Any council software changes in place</b>	1 February
<b>Preliminary EC lists to councils (except councils with boundary changes)</b>	late February
<b>Preliminary CEO list to VEC (except councils with boundary changes)</b>	1 March –30 April
<b>Ward boundary changes implemented for councils with boundary changes. Followed by EC list to council and CEO list to VEC</b>	22 April
<b>Preliminary feedback for council action</b>	April–June
<b>Council uses feedback to correct database* (remove deceased and duplicate records, correct invalid data)</b>	before 11 July
<b>Council mails renewal forms to all applicants on 2012 roll (Section 23A(1) of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i>)</b>	before 11 July
<b>Date for primary council enrolment data (CEO list) to VEC*</b>	by 5pm, Monday 11 July
<b>Date for the provision of council enrolment data</b>	Friday 26 August (4pm)
<b>Changes to the roll from the date for primary enrolment data (11 July) until entitlement date (26 August) must be applied before certification. These will be calculated by the VEC from two full roll extracts (primary enrolment and certification) provided by councils in identical format.</b>	
<b>Certification CEO list to VEC. CEO list as at 4pm Friday 26 August.</b>	by 5pm Monday 29 August
<b>Roll certification &amp; nominations open</b>	Thursday 15 September
<b>Election date</b>	Saturday 22 October
<b>*It is expected that council CEO list data at the primary enrolment data point will be accurate to the extent that no more than 10% of council records will need to be removed during roll processing.</b>	

## Appendix 4: Victoria's municipalities and electoral structures

The estimate of voters for each council is based on anticipated voters as at January 2015.

The VEC has recently completed an electoral representation review of this municipality. If approved, the recommended number of councillors and electoral structure (shown) will take effect at the 2016 local government elections.

An electoral representation review of this municipality was underway or pending at the time of printing this plan. The electoral representation review program will be completed by 22 April 2016.

Municipality	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Estimate of voters	Number of Councillors	Electoral structure
<b>Alpine</b>	4,788	11,569	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Ararat</b>	4,211	9,103	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Ballarat</b>	739	76,304	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Banyule</b>	63	94,043	7	7 x single-councillor wards
<b>Bass Coast</b>	865	42,595	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Baw Baw</b>	4,031	37,107	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Bayside</b>	37	73,333	7	1 x three-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards
<b>Benalla</b>	2,353	11,558	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Boroondara</b>	60	124,670	10	10 x single-councillor wards
<b>Brimbank</b>	123	130,919	11	3 x three-councillor wards 1 x two-councillor ward
<b>Buloke</b>	8,000	5,887	7	1 x three-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards
<b>Campaspe</b>	4,519	29,363	9	2 x three-councillor wards 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Cardinia</b>	1,282	63,201	9	1 x four-councillor ward 1 x three-councillor ward 1 x two-councillor ward
<b>Casey</b>	409	183,392	11	5 x two-councillor wards 1 x single-councillor ward
<b>Central Goldfields</b>	1,533	11,114	7	1 x four-councillor ward 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Colac Otway</b>	3,438	19,919	7	Unsubdivided

<b>Corangamite</b>	4,408	13,267	7	1 x three-councillor ward 4 x single-councillor wards
<b>Darebin</b>	54	105,532	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>East Gippsland</b>	20,940	40,819	9	Unsubdivided
<b>Frankston</b>	130	101,894	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Gannawarra</b>	3,735	8,996	7	1 x three-councillor ward 1 x two-councillor ward 2 x single-councillor wards
<b>Glen Eira</b>	39	100,887	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Glenelg</b>	6,218	16,899	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Golden Plains</b>	2,703	17,231	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Greater Bendigo</b>	3,000	83,641	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Greater Dandenong</b>	130	98,219	11	3 x three-councillor wards 1 x two-councillor ward
<b>Greater Geelong</b>	1,248	177,363	13	1 x Mayor directly elected by the voters at-large 12 x single-councillor wards
<b>Greater Shepparton</b>	2,422	44,309	9	Unsubdivided
<b>Hepburn</b>	1,473	15,131	7	2 x two-councillor wards 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Hindmarsh</b>	7,524	5,003	6	3 x two-councillor wards
<b>Hobsons Bay</b>	64	65,547	7	1 x three-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards
<b>Horsham</b>	4,267	15,863	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Hume</b>	504	123,512	11	2 x four-councillor wards 1 x three-councillor ward
<b>Indigo</b>	2,040	13,032	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Kingston</b>	91	114,844	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Knox</b>	114	115,518	9	9 x single-councillor wards
<b>Latrobe</b>	1,426	55,234	9	1 x four-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards 1 x single-councillor ward
<b>Loddon</b>	6,696	7,567	5	5 x single-councillor wards
<b>Macedon Ranges</b>	1,748	35,611	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Manningham</b>	113	87,039	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Mansfield</b>	3,844	10,363	5	1 x two-councillor ward 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Maribyrnong</b>	31	57,610	7	1 x three-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards
<b>Maroondah</b>	61	82,917	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Melbourne</b>	37	114,656	11	Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor directly elected as a leadership team by the voters at-large Unsubdivided
<b>Melton</b>	528	84,699	9	1 x four-councillor ward 1 x three-councillor ward 1 x two-councillor ward
<b>Mildura</b>	22,083	39,120	9	Unsubdivided
<b>Mitchell</b>	2,862	29,402	9	3 x three-councillor wards

<b>Moira</b>	4,047	23,910	9	Unsubdivided
<b>Monash</b>	82	121,963	11	3 x three-councillor wards 1 x two-councillor ward
<b>Moonee Valley</b>	43	87,392	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Moorabool</b>	2,111	25,005	7	1 x four-councillor ward 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Moreland</b>	51	117,830	11	2 x four-councillor wards 1 x three-councillor ward
<b>Mornington Peninsula</b>	724	150,891	11	2 x three-councillor wards 1 x two-councillor ward 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Mount Alexander</b>	1,530	16,044	7	1 x three-councillor ward 4 x single-councillor wards
<b>Moyne</b>	5,482	14,299	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Murrindindi</b>	3,879	14,091	7	7 x single-councillor wards
<b>Nillumbik</b>	432	47,068	7	7 x single-councillor wards
<b>Northern Grampians</b>	5,728	10,925	7	1 x three-councillor ward 1 x two-councillor ward 2 x single-councillor wards
<b>Port Phillip</b>	21	83,629	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Pyrenees</b>	3,435	7,264	5	5 x single-councillor wards
<b>Borough of Queenscliffe</b>	9	4,237	5	Unsubdivided
<b>South Gippsland</b>	3,297	28,249	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Southern Grampians</b>	6,655	13,213	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Stonnington</b>	26	84,207	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Strathbogie</b>	3,303	9,628	7	2 x two-councillor wards 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Surf Coast</b>	1,553	31,582	9	1 x four-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards 1 x single-councillor ward
<b>Swan Hill</b>	6,115	14,518	7	1 x four-councillor ward 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Towong</b>	6,675	5,520	5	Unsubdivided
<b>Wangaratta</b>	3,645	22,122	7	1 x four-councillor ward 3 x single-councillor wards
<b>Warrnambool</b>	121	25,850	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Wellington</b>	10,817	42,533	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>West Wimmera</b>	9,108	3,917	5	Unsubdivided
<b>Whitehorse</b>	64	113,729	10	5 x two-councillor wards
<b>Whittlesea</b>	490	128,052	11	2 x four-councillor wards 1 x three-councillor ward
<b>Wodonga</b>	433	28,574	7	Unsubdivided
<b>Wyndham</b>	542	128,254	11	2 x four-councillor wards 1 x three-councillor ward
<b>Yarra</b>	19	71,291	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Yarra Ranges</b>	2,466	112,200	9	3 x three-councillor wards
<b>Yarriambiack</b>	7,326	6,116	7	1 x three-councillor ward 2 x two-councillor wards

## Appendix 5: Volumes in 2012

The following table provides the volumes of voters, votes and resources required or produced for the 2012 local government elections.

	Postal	City of Melbourne	Attendance	Total
<b>Elections</b>	68	2	8	78
<b>Quotes requested</b>	24	1	2	27
<b>Tenders advertised</b>	47	-	7	54
<b>Total voters</b>	3,250,033	108,514	739,460	4,098,007
<b>Total EC voters</b>	2,840,890	43,691	637,390	3,521,971
<b>Total CEO voters</b>	409,143	64,823	102,070	576,036
<b>Number of elections</b>	522	2	69	593
<b>Number of vacancies</b>	548	10	72	630
<b>Uncontested elections</b>	23	-	3	26
<b>Candidates</b>	1,733	49	271	2,053
<b>Online completion of nom form</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,296
<b>Online completion of candidate statement</b>	1,096	N/A	N/A	1,096
<b>Candidate statements</b>	1,671	22		1,693
<b>HTVCs registered (attendance only)</b>	N/A	N/A	506	506
<b>Voting centres (attendance only)</b>	N/A	N/A	173	173
<b>Early voting centres (attendance only)</b>	N/A	N/A	22	22
<b>Number of postal votes (attendance only)</b>	N/A	N/A	28,996	28,996
<b>Number of early votes (attendance only)</b>	N/A	N/A	91,382	91,382
<b>Ballot packs (standard)</b>	3,195,763	108,496	N/A	3,304,259
<b>Ballot packs (Braille)</b>	35	N/A	N/A	35
<b>Ballot packs (large print)</b>	112	3	26	141
<b>PR counts</b>	130	1	16	147
<b>Preferential counts (computer)</b>	1	1	-	2
<b>Preferential counts (manual)</b>	91	-	33	124
<b>Apparent failure to vote notices</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	505,582
<b>Complaints</b>	254	5	66	325
<b>Stand-alone election offices</b>	28	1	9	38
<b>Hub election offices</b>	16	-	-	16
<b>Satellite election offices</b>	24	-	-	24
<b>Phone enquiries</b>	102,878	3,360	2,6015	132,253
<b>Recounts</b>	4	-	2	6

## Appendix 6: Format for the supply of CEO voters list

Data you send us must be clearly labelled and accompanied by a Council Data Information sheet, so that the VEC has the information needed to read and process council data. If your system produces these details automatically, there is no need to transcribe the information, just include the output with your data file. Please supply the record layout for the data if different to the standard format.

Please do not send unidentified files as the resultant delays could jeopardise Municipal Voters Roll production.

The format on the next page is a guide to the required data. The VEC can cope with different data formats and would rather do this than lose any data. Standard formats have been established for each software supplier, to which councils are expected to adhere.

- The most important principle in extracting the CEO list is that no information is lost in the export process. Provide the fields as you store them in preference to truncating or concatenating fields to fit the following format. The VEC would rather deal with a different format than with missing data.
- Please do NOT open an extracted file in Excel or Access before sending it to us; both are liable to corrupt data in quite complex ways which can be very difficult to detect. Make a copy of the file if you want to do any checking, but send us the untouched original file.
- No data should be truncated.
- A delimited file is preferred, using the pipe symbol | or TAB rather than comma (commas can appear in data fields). Records may also be fixed-length and fixed-format.
- Variations to this format may be negotiated, as long as all the necessary fields are provided in full.
- Separate ward files are not required; it is preferable that only one file is provided with the ward code on each record.
- A voter should not appear more than once in a municipality, however many properties they own.
- All data sent to the VEC should be uploaded to the new secure data server. This can be accessed via a web-based interface at [dex.vec.vic.gov.au](http://dex.vec.vic.gov.au). All councils will be provided with an account to login to the server. This secure data server conforms to current security standards. The server is optimised for large data sets, and will eliminate delays caused by email security filters and reduce the risk of a privacy breach.

FIELDS REQUIRED (mandatory fields are marked \*, others may be blank)

Field	Comments
<b>Municipality ID *</b>	Mandatory 3 character text field eg 522 allocated by the VEC.
<b>Ward ID *</b>	Mandatory 2 character text field eg 03.
<b>Person ID *</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council and allow efficient processing of "Update Files"
<b>Surname *</b>	eg van der Walt
<b>Given Names *</b>	eg Paul Andrew William
<b>Gender</b>	M or F or leave blank
<b>Birth Date</b>	Date format DD/MM/YYYY Councils should have DOB on 80% of records
<b>Property ID *</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council and allow efficient processing of "Update Files"
<b>Capital Improved Value *</b>	Numeric – whole \$ value (no commas). DO NOT include comma separators. 0 if not rated. To allow decisions on duplicates.
<b>Property Name</b>	Where a property requires more than the street address to identify it, for example a caravan park, hospital name or a country property. Eg <i>Kadina Caravan Park, Bellbird Hospital, Killara, Westfield Retirement Village</i>
<b>Address Number</b>	} Unit 4or Flat 18 or RMB 7654 etc 237A Oxford or address string if separate fields are not available Unit 4/237A Oxford St Street Mandatory – no parish names
<b>Street Number</b>	
<b>Street Name</b>	
<b>Street Type</b>	
<b>Place Name *</b>	
<b>Post Code</b>	TEXT field, not numeric
<b>Contact Address Line1</b>	} Used for mailing ballot papers and voter cards as well as for duplicate matching Where 3 addresses are stored, Residential Address is more useful in these fields than Contact Address
<b>Contact Address Line2</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line3</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line4</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line5</b>	
<b>Nominated property *</b>	Y/N Flag - indicates owner wants voting entitlement based on this property
<b>Silent *</b>	Y/N Flag - indicates council has accepted request for address not to be shown on roll. Addresses must still be provided for matching purposes.
<b>VICMAP identifier</b>	Use <i>Property_PFI</i> from Land Victoria's Physical Data Model - Vicmap Property (Standard) or leave blank if not available
<b>Voter Status Code *</b>	Indicates legislative basis for this voting entitlement (single character – see below)
<b>Change type *</b>	L for CEO List.

A more detailed explanation of these fields appear on the following two pages.



<b>Municipality ID</b>	The ID allocated by the Victorian Electoral Commission for this municipality.
<b>Ward ID</b>	The ID allocated to the ward in which this voter is entitled to vote. (The Municipality ID and Ward ID together comprise the 5 digit 'LGA Id', which uniquely identifies the ward within the state.)
<b>Person ID</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council, duplicate identification and efficient processing of "Update" files.
<b>Surname Given Names</b>	Surname and Given Names should be provided separately, so names can be appropriately presented for mailouts and on the scannable roll.
<b>Gender</b>	M or F or blank if unknown. Do not use U for unknown.
<b>Birth Date</b>	Date format DD/MM/YYYY Leave blank if not available. Council should have date of birth on at least 80% of their records.

The following address fields make up the ENTITLEMENT ADDRESS, the basis on which the voter is included on the Roll.

<b>Property ID</b>	From Council system. To facilitate feedback to council, duplicate identification and efficient processing of "Update" files.
<b>Capital Improved Value</b>	Numeric – whole \$ value only. DO NOT include comma separators. <b>0</b> if not rated. Facilitates decisions on duplicates.
<b>Property Name</b>	Where a property requires more than the street address to identify it, for example a caravan park, hospital name or a country property.
<b>Address Number Street Number Street Name Street Type</b>	Unit 4 or Flat 18 or RMB 7654 etc 237 or address string, if separate fields are not available <i>Oxfordeg Unit 4/237 Oxford St or RMB 1419 Western Highway Street</i> Include flat/lot/RMB details
<b>Place Name</b>	The name of the City/Suburb/Town/Locality. These should be gazetted place names, parish names are NOT acceptable.
<b>Post Code</b>	The Postcode of the Entitlement Address. Postcodes should always be treated as text.

The next set of address lines relate to the contact address. This must be different from the entitlement address or the record should be omitted as a resident owner (except applicants).

If you store the contact address as one free format field, please supply it in the same way regardless of size, do not split it into fields and do not truncate it.

This is the address used for mailing voter cards, information brochures and ballot papers. If your system stores Residential Address as well as Contact Address, extract the Residential Address for preference as this will give better matching in the duplicate identification process and is generally more satisfactory for mailing ballot papers. Real estate agent addresses are highly undesirable as ballot papers should not fall into the wrong hands.

<b>Contact Address Line1</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line2</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line3</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line4</b>	
<b>Contact Address Line5</b>	Postcodes should always be treated as text to prevent errors such as Northern Territory postcodes appearing as <i>827</i> instead of <i>0827</i>
<b>Nominated Property</b>	Y/N Flag - Y indicates that this multiple property owner wants their voting entitlement based on this property rather than others they own.
<b>Silent</b>	Y/N Flag indicates council has accepted request for address not to be shown on roll. Addresses must still be provided for matching purposes.
<b>VICMAP identifier</b>	Use <i>Property_PFI</i> from Land Victoria's Physical Data Model - Vicmap Property (Standard) or leave blank if not available. This field will assist with Representation Reviews in the future.
<b>Voter Status Code</b>	This field should contain the code used by the municipality to indicate the

	<p>voter's category of entitlement, ie. Non-resident owner, company appointee etc.</p> <p>A list of the council codes used and their descriptions must be provided on the Council Data Information Sheet, otherwise we have to guess which of the following codes your voters belong to.</p> <p>Council codes will be standardised by conversion to one of the following to be displayed on the printed roll:</p> <p><b>N</b> Non Resident Owner - automatic entitlement  <b>A</b> Resident Owner (not on EC list) application  <b>P</b> Occupier ratepayer application  <b>O</b> Corporation (owner) application (does not expire)  <b>T</b> Corporation (occupier) application</p>
<b>Change Type</b>	<b>L</b> for CEO list.

The Council Data Information Sheet on the following page should be provided every time you send data to the Victorian Electoral Commission. Record counts and Voter Status Codes enable us to verify that we have correctly read the data. Ward numbers and names are needed to check the mapping we use.

## 2016 Council Data Information Sheet

Please upload all data to [dex.vec.vic.gov.au](http://dex.vec.vic.gov.au) and email this form to [CEOList@vec.vic.gov.au](mailto:CEOList@vec.vic.gov.au)

**Name of the municipality** .....

**Contact** ..... **Phone No** .....

**E-mail address** .....

**Software Used**

What software is used to run the database that this data was extracted from? Please supply the record layout for the data if different to the standard format.

.....

**Ward Names**

We need to check that we are using the correct ward names for each ward identifier in your file.

Ward ID	Ward name

**Voter Count**

Number of voters in file	
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**Voter Status Code Information**

This is the code you use to identify the different legislative categories of entitlement to be on your Roll

Standardised Voter Status Code	Your Council Voter Status Code (if different)
<b>N</b> Non Resident Owner - automatic entitlement	
<b>A</b> Resident Owner (not on EC list) application	
<b>P</b> Occupier ratepayer application	
<b>O</b> Corporation (owner) application	
<b>T</b> Corporation (occupier) application	

## Appendix 7: Community languages

The VEC currently provides translated information and operates dedicated interpreter telephone lines in the community languages listed below (plus one for “all other languages”). This is to ensure that the VEC meets the community language requirements of councils that select the multi-language voting instructions leaflet for inclusion in the ballot pack, or for use at attendance voting centres.

Language	Telephone	Language description
<b>Amharic</b>	9209 0190	- African language
<b>Arabic</b>	9209 0100	
<b>Bosnian</b>	9209 0191	
<b>Chinese</b>	9209 0101	- Cantonese
<b>Chinese</b>	9209 0106	- Mandarin
<b>Croatian</b>	9209 0102	
<b>Dari</b>	9209 0193	- African language
<b>Dinka</b>	9209 0119	- African language
<b>Greek</b>	9209 0103	
<b>Italian</b>	9209 0104	
<b>Khmer</b>	9209 0192	
<b>Korean</b>	9209 0194	
<b>Macedonian</b>	9209 0105	
<b>Persian</b>	9209 0195	
<b>Russian</b>	9209 0196	
<b>Serbian</b>	9209 0107	
<b>Somali</b>	9209 0108	- African language
<b>Spanish</b>	9209 0109	
<b>Turkish</b>	9209 0110	
<b>Vietnamese</b>	9209 0111	
<b>All other non-English languages</b>	9209 0112	

# Appendix 8: Communication plan

Communication and education services and products provided to council.

## Advertising and Publicity

### Statutory advertising campaign

- Development of advertisements for all election phases — notice of entitlement, notice of election, voting details and declaration of results
- Placement and monitoring of all advertisements created

### Statewide advertising campaign

- Development of statewide advertising campaign covering print, radio and social media
- Placement and monitoring of statewide advertising campaign in English and multi-language media

## Optional

- Voting Reminder advertisement — creation and placement

## Publicity

- Media releases developed to accompany each phase of the advertising campaign
- Handling all media enquiries regarding election activities
- Proofing of council's election-related information for newsletters, websites (created by council)

## Public Enquiries

- Handling all public enquiries
- Provision of an overflow call centre
- Provision of translated election material and interpreter service
- Responding to all email enquiries
- Website information

## Accessibility

- Availability of Braille/large print ballot papers
- Mailout to Vision Australia/Blind Citizens Australia database re availability of above
- Provision of National Relay Service for hearing impaired electors
- Free BrowseAloud software to read webpages via the VEC website

## Education

- School and community group education sessions (face-to-face)
- Enrolment sessions in homelessness agencies and prisons – only for attendance elections
- Distribution of community sector election information kits – to be confirmed
- Email blasts to community sector groups – particularly for disability
- Special voting services within homelessness agencies

## Products

- *EasyVote* letter
- Uncontested leaflet
- Multi-language voting instruction leaflet (for metro councils — postal, optional)
- Reference information and election office contact details for council staff
- Easy English Guide to Council Elections publication - no cost to council

## Appendix 9: Community education

Community engagement and education program
<p><b>Education and information sessions</b></p> <p>Face-to-face education or information sessions with all target audiences. Participants will be encouraged to enrol and vote. The focus of education sessions will be the importance of voting in the local council elections, the election method (e.g. postal or attendance) with an emphasis on how to vote correctly.</p>
<p><b>Enrolment outreach</b></p> <p>Special enrolment sessions will be conducted in homelessness agencies and with Indigenous community.</p>
<p><b>Information kit</b></p> <p>Community Sector Information Kit to be distributed to community based organisations. The kit will contain information about resources and services available to the communities.</p>
<p><b>Passport to Democracy resources</b></p> <p>As part of the <i>Passport to Democracy</i> program, resources will be produced that aim to increase students understanding of the local government, in particular how students can take action on local community issues. Election specific activities such as special information sessions and special voting services in homelessness agencies, an email newsletter for the community sector and briefing sessions will be offered to state-wide networks relating to target audiences.</p>













Victorian Electoral Commission

Level 11, 530 Collins Street Melbourne Victoria 3000

Ph: 03 8620 1100 | Fax: 03 9629 8632

[vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au)

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