

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION - RESPONSE TO REPORT ON THE INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2018 VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION

| EMC RECOMMENDATION | VEC RESPONSE |
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| Inclusive election indicators—enrolment, turnout and formality | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 1:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC consider the appropriateness of its enrolment rate target in light of increases in enrolment nationwide.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Since 2008-09, the VEC has set a target for State enrolment to be at least 1% higher than the national average. With the continuing success of both Commonwealth and State direct enrolment programs and that consequently some 96.5% of the estimated eligible Victorian population is enrolled, a target of 97.5% or higher becomes aspirational.</p> <p>The VEC will adjust its enrolment rate target to be within 1% of the national average.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 2:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC regularly publish data on the proportion of eligible electors who are enrolled, broken down by age.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will introduce regular reporting to enable assessment against national data.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 3:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC establish performance targets relating to the proportion of people in different age brackets who are enrolled. This will enable it to track its progress in this area.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Further analysis and a period to benchmark performance targets would need to be undertaken.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 4:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of VoterAlert at impacting voter turnout, including a cost-benefit analysis, and publish the results. The VEC should consider this evaluation in deciding whether to continue or expand the program at future elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC regularly assesses the impact of the VoterAlert service in terms of the total number of voters subscribed to the service, voter turnout amongst VoterAlert subscribers, internet traffic, utilisation of VEC services generated as a result of VoterAlert messages, and feedback on voter services collected directly from voters. Much of this information was reported in the VEC's report on the 2018 State election. Analysis of recipients of VoterAlert emails and posts reveals that VoterAlert helped to maintain voter turnout in the 2018 State election.</p> <p>The age profile of VoterAlert recipients was skewed to younger age groups. More than 89% of enrolled 18 year olds were signed up to VoterAlert in 2018, compared to only 26.5% of 66 year olds. All age groups under 40 had a VoterAlert sign-up rate of more than 70%. This meant that VoterAlert was well targeted to younger age groups.</p> |

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| | <p>Voter turnout statistics show that VoterAlert was effective in increasing participation. While VoterAlert recipients who were 48 and older had slightly lower voter turnout rates than their age groups as a whole, the opposite was true for younger voters. Every age group between 18 and 47 showed higher voter turnout for VoterAlert recipients than for their age group as a whole. The difference was well over 1.5 percentage points for all age groups between 23 and 40. The biggest advantage was 2.79 percentage points, for those aged 31 in 2018.</p> <p>While overall voter turnout declined in 2018, that decline would have been much sharper without VoterAlert.</p> <p>Although VoterAlert was used en masse at the 2018 State election for the first time, it has also been used in council by-elections since. On average, the increase in participation in council by-elections since the service was introduced is 0.14% on the council general election figures. This is significant given that council by-election figures are usually lower than those for council general elections.</p> <p>The VEC has programmed reports for the 2020 Victorian Local Government elections to measure the impact of VoterAlert reminders on participation across age groups. The number of website visitors to check enrolment (in the week prior to the close of roll) increased more than twenty-fold compared to the equivalent period in 2016. The increase in visitors to the website overall was 742%. A total of 89% of those contacts resulted directly from VoterAlert messages. Phone enquiries during the same period also broke records, registering an 84.4% increase on 2016 figures. The majority of these increases have been directly attributable to VoterAlert.</p> <p>A pilot initiative was implemented at the 2020 Victorian Local Government elections to test the effectiveness of different digital engagement options with young voters aged 18-29 in the voting phase. The VEC will also use this opportunity to contrast the effectiveness of the digital delivery mode between paid social media and VoterAlert.</p> <p>A more detailed evaluation of the VoterAlert system, including a cost-benefit analysis will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional information on the use of VEC services as a result of VoterAlert messaging • a more detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of VoterAlert subscribers • an assessment of the costs of VoterAlert against benefits, such as voter turnout rates and use of VEC services particularly when contrasted with traditional media • the cost savings resulting from a different delivery platform adopted earlier this year. <p>Furthermore, research conducted by and on behalf of the VEC indicates that an SMS/email reminder system, such as VoterAlert, is a critical factor for encouraging people to vote. For example, a research report surveying non-voters at the 2018 State election found that 64% of respondents supported being</p> |

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| | sent an SMS text or email reminder on election day. Young survey respondents also supported an SMS/email reminder service. |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 5:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in future post-election reporting, the VEC publish an analysis of the explanations given for not voting and what that indicates about why people did not vote.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC captures high level reasons provided by non-voters in response to notices issued during compulsory voting enforcement in its Election Management System. These include acceptable excuses and those that are not acceptable. Non-acceptable (invalid) excuses are currently not broken down to a more granular level but include any excuse not included as acceptable and covered in section 163(3) of the <i>Electoral Act 2002</i>. Acceptable excuses include: the elector was absent from Victoria on election day; the elector was ill or infirm; etc. The VEC can publish statistical information regarding acceptable reasons for failing to vote provided in response to the Apparent Failure-to-Vote Notice (AFTN) in the VEC’s report on the election. It should be noted that only a minority of non-voters reply to the VEC’s AFTNs. Some who do reply, may be motivated by the avoidance of a fine, which may cast some doubt on the reliability of these replies.</p> <p>In addition, the VEC regularly conducts research to better understand reasons for not voting. The VEC engaged a market research company, to survey non-voters at previous elections – the 2014 State election and 2016 Victorian Local Government elections, and also the 2018 State election. These reports are made available on the VEC website. These reports provide much more detailed insights to the reasons why people did not vote.</p> <p>The most recent report, <i>Understanding Non-Voters of the 2018 Victorian State Election</i>, revealed that unavailability was the most common reason for not voting, with 58% of respondents being overseas or interstate at the time of the election. Reasons related to a lack of knowledge was the next most common reason for not voting, while a smaller proportion selected reasons related to unwillingness. Given that larger numbers of eligible electors have been travelling outside Victoria in November, it is not surprising that these numbers have increased. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in November 2018 almost 230,000 Victorians were overseas; in November 2019 this figure increased to 237,000. In fact, over the last 10 years, the number of Australians out of the country in November has increased by more than 70%¹.</p> <p>At the present time, an online/internet voting option is not available to Victorian electors travelling outside the State at election time. This option is often suggested to the VEC in surveys where the VEC asks what it could do to improve its services.</p> <p>Delays in postal services overseas can also cause issues. The VEC has tried emailing ballot papers to electors who are overseas who are unable to attend an overseas voting location, but this was only utilised</p> |

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/tourism-and-transport/overseas-arrivals-and-departures-australia/nov-2019#australian-resident-returns-short-term-trips>

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| | <p>by 12,268 voters at the 2018 State election. The voter must have access to a printer and then use the postal service in their respective country to return their ballot papers. Travellers on organised tours or travelling to remote locations are not able to get to those embassies offering voting services to vote.</p> <p>In the VEC’s report on non-voters after the 2018 State election, reasons related to unwillingness to vote were the smallest of the three broad categories but were still significant at 31% of respondents. Typical reasons given were that there was no-one that the respondent wanted to vote for, an objection to compulsory voting, or that the issues important to the respondent were not considered. Such reasons are likely behind the estimated 40% of informal votes that were deliberate. These attitudes are set in a context of a general decline in satisfaction with democracy as noted in the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) report. The VEC will continue to use this research to inform its education and engagement programs, but acknowledges the EMC’s finding that there are broader issues here outside the VEC’s control.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 6:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC identify directly enrolled electors as a priority group for its inclusion and participation efforts and implement engagement programs aimed specifically at increasing turnout among directly enrolled voters.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>As noted in the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) report, research conducted and commissioned by the VEC identifies directly enrolled voters, particularly those aged between 18 and 24 years old, as less likely to vote compared with other groups of voters.</p> <p>There may be many reasons why directly enrolled voters are less inclined to vote during elections and the VEC is currently exploring these reasons in more detail. Most importantly from research, the VEC has identified that as a whole, directly enrolled voters tend to have different attitudes to voting when compared to those that are not directly enrolled. Directly enrolled voters are generally less engaged and interested in voting than other types of voters.</p> <p>It is also possible that many of those directly enrolled electors who do vote - intentionally vote informal. This is surmised from the attitudes and findings from VEC research on directly enrolled electors as many who are directly enrolled likely object to compulsory voting. The VEC will test this assumption in the informal voting survey after the 2022 State election.</p> <div data-bbox="758 1105 1157 1323" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Facebook post - Tuesday 13 Oct 2020.</p> <p>Specific engagement activities for this group of voters are also being planned/designed for the 2022 State election.</p> |

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| | <p>During the 2020 local government elections, the VEC piloted a co-designed social media approach with younger voters to trial some engagement concepts, which young disengaged voters have recommended. This pilot will be evaluated to further refine future strategies to target those who are directly enrolled and less engaged with the voting process. The VEC is also planning to ensure a more streamlined collaboration between the enrolment, electoral education and voting engagement processes with the development of its first VEC Young People’s Inclusion Plan which has a long-term goal of <i>engaged, informed and aware young people who take the initiative to enrol and vote formally</i>.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 7:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC provide more detailed explanations of the factors affecting voter turnout at future elections. These explanations should, where possible, include quantifications of each factor’s contribution to overall turnout results and analyses of longer-term trends. The VEC should use this information to guide and evaluate its subsequent strategies and programs to increase turnout.</p> | <p>The VEC does not support this recommendation.</p> <p>As the Australian Electoral Commission observed after the 2016 Federal election, there are “many factors that may result in lower levels of voter turnout and in many cases it is not possible to accurately quantify or even separately identify the impact of these factors”. An elector may belong to a number of different social groups and have a range of attitudes, which all impinge on the elector’s propensity to vote. Some factors may apply across the whole body of electors; others to a particular group. The fact that a person belongs to a group does not entirely explain that elector’s voting behaviour. It is unrealistic to expect to be able to quantify all the factors that contribute to variations in voter turnout, with each factor comprising a neat discrete slice of a pie chart. The VEC will continue to analyse voter turnout after each election, point to factors that appear to have affected turnout, and quantify those factors as far as possible.</p> <p>The VEC’s report also stated that the high number of Victorians overseas contributed to the drop in voter turnout in 2018. The VEC’s view was based on numbers derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The number of Australians overseas in November 2018 was 935,000. Of these, 25% (230,000) were Victorians. Electors constitute some 66% of the population. Using this fraction, an estimated 152,000 Victorian electors were overseas in November 2018. With 4,883 votes at overseas early voting centres and 12,268 emailed ballot packs (not all of which would have been sent overseas), the number of Victorians who voted overseas in 2018 was only a fraction of the estimated number who were eligible to vote. The research mentioned above revealed that inability to vote through being overseas was the biggest single reason for failure to vote in 2018, with 42% of respondents stating that this is why they didn’t vote.</p> <p>Research commissioned by the VEC indicates that non-voters who were overseas in 2018 were generally strongly committed to voting. The solution is to make it easier for this group to vote. Some 80% of overseas/interstate non-voters suggested that being able to vote online would make it easier for them to vote. An approach would be to adopt the New Zealand system where voters can download their voting papers using the New Zealand Electoral Commission secure online system. Voters print and complete their papers, scan/photograph their completed papers, then upload them to the secure system. The New Zealand Electoral Commission has advised that the number of overseas New Zealanders using this service in 2020 was 59,000 (94% of the 63,000 total overseas voters). See the VEC’s response to Recommendation 25.</p> |

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| | <p>The VEC’s report on the 2018 State election pointed to direct enrolment as one of the factors depressing voter turnout. A research report on non-voters at the 2018 State election confirmed that directly enrolled non-voters are less engaged than other non-voters and are a priority group for the VEC’s future focus.</p> <p>Research is also currently being considered for the following groups: people living with a disability, and voters from multicultural backgrounds and English as a second language to determine reasons for failing to vote.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 8:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC publish apparently intentional and apparently accidental informal voting rates as a percentage of all votes in its post-election reporting. Reports should also discuss trends in these rates as a percentage of all votes over time.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Different types of informal votes as a percentage of all votes will be included in future post-election reporting.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 9:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC reinstate its analysis of informal Upper House ballot papers at future elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC discontinued its survey of Upper House informal votes for the 2018 State election because the informal vote had stabilised at a low level. The small increase in Upper House informal votes in 2018 suggests that it would be desirable to examine these votes at future elections, and the VEC intends to do so.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 10:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC conduct an analysis of Upper House ballot papers to estimate the number of votes that included multiple preferences above the line, to understand how much confusion is being caused by having different systems at Commonwealth and state levels and to inform future information and education campaigns.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC notes the Electoral Matters Committee’s concerns regarding possible confusion caused by differing voting systems across jurisdictions. Whilst the completion of ballot papers above-the-line (ATL) requires an elector to place a number one against a single group ballot papers further completed with continuing preferences are not excluded unless there is more than one number one. Where further preferences are completed, any numbers after the number one are ignored which may not be apparent to voters completing multiple numbers ATL.</p> <p>Understanding the number of voters who complete multiple preferences above-the-line would involve manually inspecting completed ballot papers as this data is not captured electronically. The average number of formal votes marked ATL is around 420 – 450K per region. Assuming the Upper House voting system remains the same for the 2022 State election, the VEC will consider a sampling process in the post-election period to give an indication of the number of ATL ballot papers completed with more than one preference.</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 11:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC ensure the research it sponsors into informal voting includes an investigation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reasons for the continued increase in informal voting in Victorian Lower House elections • the consistently high rate of informal voting in Victorian Lower House elections compared to other Australian jurisdictions • the increase in apparently accidental informality at the 2018 election • the reasons for informality in Upper House elections. | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC intends to conduct a comprehensive analysis of informal votes for both Houses at the 2022 State election, in collaboration with Dr Lisa Hill from the University of Adelaide. The VEC will compare the results of this analysis with its previous surveys of informal votes to detect and as far as possible explain trends in informal voting. The analysis will uncover, for example, whether the increase in apparently accidental informal votes in 2018 was a one-off incident or the beginning of a trend.</p> <p>In looking at levels of informal voting across Australia, it is important to compare like with like. Of the jurisdictions that have lower houses with single-member electorates, New South Wales (and Queensland until 2017) has optional preferential voting, which greatly reduces the informal vote.</p> <p>South Australia has ticket voting, under which ballot papers with insufficient numbering follow the preferences of the ticket lodged by the party or candidate for whom the voter has cast a first preference. Historically, there have been as many ticket votes as informal votes; if the ticket votes were counted as informal, as they would be in Victoria, South Australia's informal voting rate at the 2018 State election would have been 7.9%. This compares to the rate at the 2018 State election of 5.83% for the Legislative Assembly.</p> <p>Queensland and the Northern Territory have unicameral parliaments, which means there is no second ballot paper at general elections to create confusion and increase the informal vote. In Victoria, one of the largest categories of informal votes is "1 only", where voters vote in the same way as for the Upper House. This category does not exist in Queensland and the Northern Territory.</p> <p>The jurisdictions that can be compared to Victoria are the Commonwealth and Western Australia, which have compulsory preferential voting for the Lower House and a large ballot paper with above-the-line and below-the-line sections for the Upper House. The informal vote at House of Representatives elections this century has fluctuated around 5%, and in 2019 rose quite significantly from 5.05% to 5.54%. The informal vote for Western Australia's Legislative Assembly rose steadily from 4.13% in 1993 to 6% in 2013, before falling to 4.54% in 2017. When properly compared, Victoria's informal voting at 5.83% in 2018 does not stand out as particularly high.</p> <p>The VEC will investigate possible reasons for the upward trend in informal voting in Legislative Assembly elections.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 12:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC increase the depth of its analysis and reporting on informality at Victorian state elections. This includes election-to-election trends and events</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC's planned study into informal voting at the 2022 State election will build on the surveys that it has conducted at every State election since 2006. As with previous surveys, the VEC will analyse the incidence of informal voting, will categorise informal votes in ways that offer the best possible explanations for the voters' intentions, and will examine trends from previous elections.</p> |

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| <p>specific to individual elections. This reporting should be informed by research into the reasons behind informality and should be used to better measure the effectiveness of the VEC's programs aimed at decreasing informality and to improve those programs.</p> | <p>The study will include surveys of voters, though one of the main difficulties with such surveys is that most electors who have voted informally do not know that they have done so (unintentional informality). The VEC's information and education programs have identified the key barriers for all groups that are traditionally under-represented in the electoral process, including poverty, social exclusion, low levels of literacy and education. These barriers can lead to high levels of informality.</p> <p>The VEC prioritises education programs that teach voters how to vote correctly. Pre and post evaluations conducted at sessions leading up to the 2018 State election show an improvement from 70% pre-session to 94% post-session in participants' knowledge of how to fill out ballot papers correctly. In addition, the VEC has also recently launched a number of short animations on the voting process, including how to correctly complete ballot papers.</p> <p>The VEC is always considering how to strengthen these programs and is open to learning from other jurisdictions and the forthcoming study. Of note, at the 2020 Victorian Local Government elections, which were conducted entirely by post, the informality rate dropped from 6.3% in 2016 to 4.7% in 2020.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 13:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC publish and discuss turnout by age cohorts in terms of the eligible population in its future reports on state elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Voter turnout by age cohorts would provide a valuable measure of political participation. It should be noted that the eligible population is an estimate. It is derived from a well-researched algorithm but is not a solid figure like the number of enrolled electors.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 14:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in its research into reasons for not voting and attitudes toward voting among the 25-to-44-year-old age group, the VEC include a focus on the drop in turnout among 30-to-44-year-old electors at the 2018 election. This research should include data already gathered by the VEC, such as responses to Apparent Failure to Vote Notices and excuses provided prior to notices being sent, which the VEC should be able to break down by electors' ages to understand differences between age brackets. The VEC should publish the results of its research and use the information to inform efforts to improve participation at future elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC commissioned research into non-voters at the 2018 State election. The findings included analysis by age group. One of the key findings was that non-voters aged between 30 and 44 years old are more likely than other age groups to be away interstate or overseas during major electoral events. While there has been a drop in turnout amongst this age group, the research confirms that there remains a strong commitment to compulsory voting and the importance of voting amongst voters aged between 25 and 44 years.</p> <p>Further efforts to raise awareness about early and postal voting amongst this cohort are being considered. Other options, such as the ability to email completed ballot papers for those voters out of the State at election time or online voting should also be considered.</p> <p>The VEC is considering analysing responses to Apparent Failure to Vote Notices and Infringement Notices to be sent after the 2022 State election. It should be pointed out, though, that respondents are not necessarily representative of all non-voters and may not be entirely candid in their explanations.</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 15:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC ensure its research program includes research into the relationship between age and formal voting at Victorian state elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>A survey of deliberate informal voters to be conducted by a market research agency will be included in the research project to be conducted after the 2022 State election. The survey may disclose some age-related patterns.</p> <p>It is impossible to survey accidental informal voters. The VEC could correlate age with informal voting, though significant results are unlikely.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 16:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC consider the suggestions from the Committee’s CALD community forums as part of developing future plans for engaging with CALD communities.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC welcomes the ideas raised at the CALD community forums arranged by the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) but notes the very small number of people across language communities involved. In terms of the suggestions for VEC consideration, it should be noted that the VEC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has had instructions on how to complete ballot papers in language on its website for the last 14 years and is the only electoral commission in Australia to provide translated enrolment forms. • has plans to provide more detailed information – including information on voting correctly – to voters via its VoterAlert service in 2022 (although the limiting factor is that people must opt in to the service as previously mentioned) • has piloted translated social posts on how to enrol, vote correctly and respond to non-voter notices at the 2020 Victorian Local Government elections with positive early community feedback • has been conducting information sessions which include correctly completing the ballot papers for many years and has recently supplemented this activity with the online social posts • has used ethnic radio to communicate election information • is unable to play a role in reducing the complexity of the Upper House ballot paper • provides outreach sessions morning, afternoon, evening and on weekends • shared its CALD community network with the ABS for the last Census, assisting it to reach these audiences. <p>The suggested app for people to complete a virtual vote based on candidates in their own electorate to use as a how-to-vote card is an interesting idea. However, the short time between the close of nominations and the commencement of early voting may make it impractical to deliver the app in an equitable way to all voters i.e. it may not be available for early voters in time.</p> <p>The VEC has recently developed a Multicultural Inclusion Plan (2020-2023), which seeks to build on the groundwork it has in place. The Plan also takes into consideration an external evaluation of its CALD peer education program conducted during the 2018 State election. The evaluation demonstrated that the VEC’s program improved participants’ knowledge of how to fill out ballot papers correctly. The VEC will consider further expansion of these programs and include an online component.</p> |

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| | <p>Due to the recent COVID-19 restrictions, the VEC was not able to implement its face-to-face education to CALD communities for the 2020 Victorian Local Government elections and piloted ‘in-language’ social posts, which are currently being evaluated for their impact. However, the VEC template was used by the Federal Government as a basis for its COVID-19 communication to CALD audiences across Australia. The VEC is aware that communities want reliable and impartial information on candidates and their policies and is currently exploring options with similar approaches such as the Australian National University example referred to in the EMC report.</p> <p>The EMC states in its report: ‘The Committee’s broader concern is that, despite an increase in VEC programs aimed at increasing CALD participation over time, electoral participation measures continue to fall. The VEC will need to continue looking for new ways to assist and engage people from CALD backgrounds.’²</p> <p>As the EMC report states: ‘Participants also noted that voter disengagement plays a role in low turnout among CALD electors, caused by factors like a lack of issues that communities feel passionate about, a dislike of politicians in general or a lack of candidates from their communities.’³</p> <p>It is just as important that political parties and members of parliament also understand that they have a role to play; it is not entirely the VEC’s responsibility to engage people in electoral participation. It is also important to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a very healthy 90% overall satisfaction level with CALD voters – in fact, they were the most satisfied of all voters in 2018 (Colmar Brunton research) • the VEC has more programs going to education and inclusion than any other electoral commission in Australia and is considered a role model in this regard. |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 17: The committee recommends that the VEC explore ways to more objectively measure the effectiveness of its advisory groups as a means of addressing the challenges faced by certain groups of voters. The results of these measures should be included in future reports on state elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation. Evaluation of outputs and outcomes forms part of current Inclusion plans, including the role and impact of specific advisory groups.</p> <p>The VEC plans to explore more accessible formats for advisory group feedback apart from online surveys.</p> |

² P.66

³ P.49

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 18:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC consider the effectiveness of face-to-face outreach as a foundation for efforts to increase electoral participation, taking into account its inherent scale limitations, and consider alternative models that can provide greater reach and are more cost-effective as potential foundations for future outreach programs.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The importance of face-to-face outreach cannot be underestimated in terms of the effectiveness of engagement activities. You can build stronger, trusting relationships; questions can be more easily asked; and the quality of the engagement is higher, more personal and authentic. The VEC’s external evaluation of its 2018 State election face-to-face outreach education program provides evidence of the effectiveness of this model to increase electoral knowledge. It is acknowledged that this model is resource intensive and scalability is limited. The VEC is planning online engagement opportunities to augment the face-to-face outreach for the 2022 State election.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 19:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC develop and trial measures within its inclusion and participation efforts to increase turnout among electors across the entire 20-to-39-year-old age cohort and not just the youngest electors.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC will investigate ways to improve participation among this age group. It is unlikely that this age group as such is not participating, but more likely that it is two groups that are heavily represented in these age groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directly enrolled electors • overseas travellers. |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 20:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC establish an advisory group aimed at advising on engagement programs for voters from 20 to 39 years old, a cohort which consistently shows low turnout.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The 20-39 age group is such a broad and disparate group that it is unlikely that there would be much value in establishing an advisory group based purely on this age range. The VEC is considering how best to engage directly enrolled electors, who are the most significant cohort failing to vote. As previously mentioned, the VEC piloted new digital engagement techniques during the 2020 local government elections; lessons will be implemented in the 2022 State election.</p> <p>The VEC is currently finalising a Young People’s Inclusion Plan, which includes the establishment of an advisory group aged 17-29. This group will support informing electoral engagement initiatives for younger voters with lower turnout.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 21:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC provide extended voting hours on more days during the early voting period. The VEC should determine which days should have extended hours based on balancing the benefits to voters, the resource implications for the VEC and the impact on people campaigning. The Committee would not consider it appropriate for extended hours to apply on every day of the early voting period.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will continue to consider data and trends from previous elections to anticipate voting patterns for future events. Consideration will be given to the extension of early voting hours where appropriate.</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 22:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC continue to explore new ways to find more suitable early voting and election-day voting centres, including learning from the approaches in other jurisdictions where appropriate.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The challenges of finding suitable and accessible early and election day voting centres are included in the VEC’s evidence to the Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) and are articulated by the EMC in its report. The VEC will continue to review its operating model acknowledging the increased demand for early voting services and decreased demand for election day services and will adjust infrastructure as necessary but notes that the availability of suitable short-term venues will continue to be a challenge. In particular, many landlords will not accept the VEC as a tenant due to the requirement to allow campaigning outside voting locations. This has often resulted in complaints to landlords from neighbouring tenants.</p> <p>The VEC does and will continue to engage with colleagues in other jurisdictions to consider alternative models. The VEC notes specifically in New Zealand there are restrictions on campaigning outside voting centres which enables access to venues such as shopping centres and other venues in accessible locations but with limited space around entry points.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 23:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC establish an election performance target for the number of Assisted Wheelchair Access voting centres at future elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will include an election performance target for the number of Assisted Wheelchair Accessible voting centres at future elections. The VEC considers that visibility of these targets is important to highlight issues around voter accessibility. However, as with the target for Fully Accessible venues, the ability to meet a target for voting centres with Assisted Wheelchair Access will be constrained by the VEC not owning the venues used at an election and the limited options available in many locations.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 24:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC, in its briefings, proactively engage candidates and parties around the need to minimise the anxiety that some voters may experience when approaching campaigners at a voting centre, with the aim of increasing campaigner sensitivity and reducing the anxiety some voters experience.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will continue to proactively engage candidates and parties on this matter. Election Managers aim to work cooperatively with party and candidate workers at each voting location to ensure respectful and unhindered access for voters. Election Managers will remain active in enforcing their powers under section 174 of the <i>Electoral Act 2002</i>.</p> <p>However, the effectiveness of parties in relaying these requirements and in educating their campaign workers about appropriate behaviours is, from the VEC experience in 2018, mixed. Similarly, for many independent candidates and their supporters. The VEC includes protocols for party/candidates in relation to campaigning outside voting centres in its handbooks and briefings. The VEC will continue to enhance and emphasise these messages.</p> <p>It may be relevant for the Electoral Matters Committee to consider the impact of how-to-vote card distribution and campaigning more generally on behaviour outside voting centres and consequently available venue options.</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 25:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC investigate and develop ways to ensure postal voting and other voting methods remain viable options for Victorians who cannot attend a voting centre. This includes assessing whether changes need to be implemented in response to changes to Australia Post’s services.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC’s online postal vote application service was extended at the 2018 State election and will be further reviewed prior to the next State election in November 2022. This process partially removed the dependency on Australia Post by eliminating outgoing postage of ballot material.</p> <p>The VEC has observed approaches in other jurisdictions, which may require some legislative changes for these to be adopted in Victoria. For the New Zealand General Election in October 2020, overseas and other eligible voters were able to download their voting papers and an accompanying partially pre-completed declaration form, complete them, and then return them to electoral authorities by mail, hand-delivery to selected overseas voting locations or, the recommended option, scanning and uploading the completed forms through a secure website hosted by the Electoral Commission. The upload function was configured to accept each document separately – meaning electoral officials could keep the voting forms separate from the declaration form.</p> <p>Establishing a process like this for Victorian State elections would remove the significant dependency on Australia and overseas postal services, and it would allow more electors who are away from Victoria to cast their vote without having to attend a physical interstate or overseas voting location.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 26:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC establish more early voting centres in larger regional districts and consider further innovative ways of providing voting options for voters living in regional Victoria, such as mobile voting centres.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will commence work in early 2021 to review election infrastructure requirements for the 2022 State election including election offices, early voting centres, mobile voting venues and election day voting centres and will take this recommendation into consideration at that time - noting an increased number of early voting centres will be necessary to respond to increased demand for early voting.</p> <p>However, the VEC notes that the absence of additional EVCs in country districts did not depress voter turnout and the presence of additional EVCs did not increase voter turnout. Districts that had more than one early voting centre, such as Bass (91.06%) or South-West Coast (92.65%) had similar voter turnout to districts with one early voting centre such as Eildon (91.11%), Euroa (90.13%) or Polwarth (92.52%).</p> <p>These statistics suggest that voters were not restricted from voting by having limited access to early voting centres, they simply voted at an election day voting centre. In responding to the increased demand for early voting facilities, the VEC will need to balance any necessary closure of election day voting centres to ensure the convenience of voting at a nearby voting centre on election day is not replaced with the inconvenience of travelling further to a limited number of early voting centres.</p> |

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| Trustworthy and transparent elections | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 27:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC improve its transparency in relation to the security of ballot papers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outlining ballot paper security measures in future state election service plans • establishing and reporting on performance indicators and targets relating to ballot paper security as part of its election performance indicators • reporting to Parliament after an election on the effectiveness of its measures to ensure that ballot papers were free from tampering and that no ballot papers were lost, including explanations for any variations in figures that might be used to confirm ballot paper security (such as differences between the number of electors marked off the roll and the number of votes counted). | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC has established internal processes and procedures in relation to ballot paper security and reconciliations. Information in this regard has been provided to the Electoral Matters Committee. In addition, internal assurance checks are conducted to ensure integrity targets are met. The VEC will consider the best mechanism for providing increased transparency of the effectiveness of these measures at future elections.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 28:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Government amend the Electoral Act to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mandate a minimum length of time between notifying candidates and parties about a recount and commencing the recount • specify a particular form of words in which recounts are announced, to avoid any confusion, and • require the VEC to notify the relevant state secretaries of parties and contact officers for non-party-aligned candidates, as well as the candidates. | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>If the Government supports this recommendation, the VEC notes that pressures exist at all elections to finalise results as efficiently as possible so that incoming governments can be formed. In addition, the maximum time permitted for the Electoral Commissioner to return the writs to the Governor is 21 days from election day. Given the additional and concentrated scrutiny involved in recounts, the time taken to complete a recount is often greater than the original count for that election. For example, the recount for the District of Ripon took around 3.5 days. The provisional results for the Legislative Council in 2018 were completed 17 days after election day, allowing only three working days to arrange and conduct a recount if required before returning the writs. If a minimum length of time was to be set between notifying candidates and parties about the commencement of a recount, the VEC would submit that no more than four hours should be necessary for candidates/parties to mobilise resources. The VEC anticipates that candidates/parties would be monitoring close seats and anticipating where recounts were likely to occur. A maximum of 4 hours would support legislative timeframes to be met and election outcomes to be finalised as efficiently as possible. The VEC would alert candidates/parties of any recount notification procedures so that suitable strategies and contingencies can be arranged in advance.</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 29:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC provide specific explanations on the results pages of its website for any significant adjustment to figures (e.g. more than 200 votes) made between the primary count or two-candidate-preferred count and the final results (recheck or recount results).</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will consider how it can best provide specific information about variations of more than 200 votes between primary and recheck/recount results. Situations such as these are rare and the VEC has been able to provide more detailed explanations in response to enquiries. As most visitors to the VEC website are looking for the most up-to-date results, consideration will be given on how best to make further detail available for those who are looking for more information without losing clarity of the data being presented.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 30:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC include information about apparent multiple voting in all future reports on state elections. This should include quantifying the number of apparent multiple votes in each district.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC conducts an initial review of apparent instances of multiple voting for close seats in order to ensure that the total number of apparent cases cannot impact election results. Further follow-up and investigation of possible multiple voters takes place at the same time as the compulsory voting enforcement program and is not completed at the time of tabling the Report to Parliament on the election. The VEC will include as much information as is available about apparent multiple voting in future election reports. If further detail becomes available after the VEC's election report is tabled in Parliament, the VEC will include this in subsequent Annual Reports.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 31:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC publish the results of its investigations into multiple voting at each state election, including noting the number of cases which remain unexplained to the VEC's satisfaction.</p> | <p>See the VEC's response to Recommendation 30.</p> |
| Transparent performance measurement and reporting | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 32:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC review the election performance indicator and budget paper measure 'Number of legal challenges to VEC conduct upheld' to ensure that what it measures is clear or change what is included when reporting on this measure.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC has recently reviewed all of its performance indicators captured through budget paper reporting, including the measure regarding legal challenges. The updated measure more clearly articulates the basis for the VEC's 'nil' target for election challenges, so as to reduce any potential cross-over with the natural justice processes available to participants taking political disputes that arise during the course of an election to the courts.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 33:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in future election plans, the VEC include two new performance indicators with targets that relate to the suitability of venues used as a) early voting</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC has developed a number of criteria to be used when assessing and selecting venues to be used as election day and early voting centres that sit alongside the accessibility audit. The suitability of each venue is assessed by the VEC prior to an election, then again after an election to determine continued suitability.</p> |

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| <p>centres and b) election-day voting centres. These might include measures of the proportion of voting centres meeting a certain number of the VEC's selection criteria or voters' assessments as determined by the post-election evaluation. Results for these indicators should be included in future reports on state elections.</p> | <p>The selection of venues to be used as early voting centres is more problematic as the VEC is required to enter into a commercial leasing arrangement for the venues. Suitable venues are not always available in preferred locations and often the venue secured is the only venue available. For all venues the VEC's aim is to ensure best access for electors.</p> <p>The VEC is currently undertaking a full review of infrastructure for the 2022 State election and will review the suitability criteria and consider how the criteria may translate into election indicators. Consideration will be given to reviewing the questions asked of electors when undertaking voter research following the election specifically around venue suitability.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 34:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in future election plans, the VEC include two new performance indicators with targets that relate to the proportion of electors who queue for more than 10 minutes at a) early voting centres and b) election-day voting centres. Results for these indicators should be included in future reports on state elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC has considered options for capturing data related to queuing times at previous events and has found that technical solutions are not reliable, while manual solutions involve significant staff time that could be better directed in providing a direct service to voters. The VEC continues to improve methods for capturing voting patterns so that staffing profiles at both early and election day voting centres can be aligned with voting patterns. Despite this modelling, unexpected influxes of voters at particular times and particular venues can still occur.</p> <p>The VEC currently assesses how well voter estimates for each venue align with actual numbers after each event and will continue to explore efficient and accurate options for capturing elector waiting times.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 35:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in future election plans, the VEC include performance indicators that measure the accuracy of primary counts, two-candidate-preferred counts and, where possible, recheck results. Results for these indicators should be included in future reports on state elections.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation in part.</p> <p>The VEC will consider appropriate performance indicators that measure the accuracy of primary counts against recheck counts. The two-candidate-preferred (2CP) count is based on the primary count and is conducted to provide an early indication on election night of what final results would be if a preference distribution was required. The total number of ballot papers included in the 2CP count will always align with the primary count as VEC systems will not accept a variation in the total votes between these two results. The VEC does not currently adjust 2CP results after the recheck is conducted.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 36:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in developing future plans and strategies, the VEC include concrete actions, measures and quantified targets in the original plan at the time of release, so that stakeholders have a better understanding of what the VEC intends to do.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>Development of VEC strategies and plans starts with a program logic, which outlines the VEC's desired short, medium and long-term outcomes. The program logic then guides the objectives, activities and outputs required to achieve those outcomes. Strategy 2023 and the VEC's other published plans outline the principles of the VEC's approach and considerations, key delivery areas and high-level actions.</p> <p>The VEC reports on achievement of those actions through its Annual Reports, which are publicly available via the VEC website. The VEC's key strategy documents and plans are also published on the VEC's website; each of the VEC's inclusion plans is also provided in plain English and Easy English formats.</p> |

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| | <p>Detailed implementation action plans are not made public as in the majority of cases, they are internal working documents, discuss detailed activities of particular teams or units of the VEC and would offer too much unnecessary detail to the public.</p> <p>The first Strategy 2023 Monitoring & Evaluation Plan was approved by the VEC's Executive Management Group (EMG) in October 2018, three months after publication of Strategy 2023. This document set out the projects, programs and impact measures for the period July 2018 to December 2019. The impact measures articulated in this plan were first publicly reported on in the VEC's 2018-19 Annual Report. The 2020-21 plan was then approved by the EMG in February 2020, taking into account the impact of the work done up to that date. Progress against the renewed and expanded impact measures was reported in the VEC's 2019-20 Annual Report.</p> <p>The VEC has no hesitation in making available the relevant program logic and detailed implementation action plans to any person or organisation so requesting.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 37:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC make all future inclusion and participation plans, strategies and key performance indicators publicly available.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC has a Diversity & Inclusion Framework with a primary focus on five priority communities. The VEC Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is currently available in Plain English and Easy English on the VEC website. The VEC is currently completing a Multicultural Inclusion Plan, Young People's Inclusion Plan, an Out of Home Inclusion Plan (aimed at those experiencing homelessness or in prison) and an Aboriginal Inclusion Plan. All these plans will be available on the VEC website in Plain English and Easy English once complete and include strategies for inclusion until 30 June 2023. The VEC also reports on the Diversity & Inclusion Framework's key performance indicators, which form part of these plans, every year in the VEC Annual Report.</p> <p>Also, see the VEC's response to Recommendation 36.</p> |
| Competitive elections | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 38:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC talk with parties to understand their concerns about how-to-vote card registration and identify any changes to processes that could be helpful in the future. This may include emailing confirmation of each how-to-vote card's registration and providing an online register of the status of each</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC will continue to work closely with registered political parties and independent candidates during the how-to-vote card (HTVC) registration process to ensure timely communication regarding registration or any necessary changes required to meet registration requirements.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to additional methods for communicating the status of HTVCs during the registration process.</p> |

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| submitted card which parties can view at any time. | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 39:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC investigate the practicability of facilitating mental and emotional support services for candidates and their families and include a service in its 2022 election planning if appropriate.</p> | <p>The recommendation is not supported.</p> <p>As a responsible employer, the VEC offers all its staff access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides emotional and psychological assistance, advice on conflict and stress management, access to grief and trauma counselling, as well as an incident response service. The EAP ensures wraparound support is available to employees to enhance and protect their mental health and psychological wellbeing as well as their immediate families.</p> <p>The VEC has no employment relationship with candidates for political office, and the election ecosystem is a working environment over which the VEC has limited control. For the electoral management body to facilitate access to mental health services for political participants in an election would compromise the impartial and independent operation of the election.</p> <p>For these reasons, political parties – as the organiser and de facto employer for endorsed candidates – are better positioned to facilitate these arrangements for their candidates, especially given the often long-standing personal and political associations in place, which may also cross jurisdictional activities. For candidates outside a party structure, the Department of Parliamentary Services would appear best placed to provide such support, particularly given their future engagement with successful candidates.</p> |
| Voting centres | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 40:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC further develop its relationship with the police to establish procedures to enable quick and effective responses to any intimidation, harassment or violence at voting centres.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Since the 2018 State election, the VEC has established a dedicated Electoral Integrity and Regulation function with responsibility for leading the organisation’s electoral compliance and enforcement activities. This includes investing in strong working partnerships with relevant enforcement agencies, including Victoria Police, and engaging with law enforcement specifically about the complexities of electoral operations.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 41:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Government seek to amend Section 158A of the Electoral Act to provide greater clarity around how many signs candidates and parties can set up at voting centres and what is permitted to be on those signs. The Government should also consider amendments relating to the status of mobile billboards, broadening the range of premises which are exempt from the signage restrictions</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>Although there are clear benefits to clarifying existing provisions relating to the display of electoral material outside voting centres, the requirements must be kept as clear as possible. A significant criticism of the current regulatory approach is that some of the language is ambiguous, which creates confusion for political parties, groups and individual candidates who are required to comply with the requirements as well as for the electoral officials required to enforce the requirements.</p> |

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| and clarifying who is responsible for electoral signs. | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 42:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC consider the concerns raised in this chapter about the training of election officials as part of its planned review of the effective management of the VEC workforce during an election.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC notes the concerns raised in this chapter. Prior to each State election a full review of VEC training programs for election staff takes place and relevant enhancements incorporated into the training package. As training is developed in advance of an election it can be challenging to incorporate late changes resulting from legislative amendments - this can lead to some of the issues raised. The VEC is currently reviewing training delivery methods for future elections with particular focus on providing greater online content that will allow a more agile response to late changes. It should be noted however that some 20,000 staff are appointed to work on election day, often at short notice due to staff becoming unavailable. This has an impact on the ability to fully train some staff in advance of their appointment. Again, the provision of further online content should go some way to resolving this issue.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 43:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC engage an independent expert to evaluate the effectiveness of its training procedures at the 2022 election. This evaluation should include examining the actual behaviour of election officials in voting centres to understand how effectively the training is translated into practice.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>At the recent local government elections, the VEC engaged the services of on-line training professionals and also leveraged off learning and development expertise in order to prepare and deliver training to election officials. The success of this program is being evaluated in advance of the 2022 State election. The VEC will continue to apply contemporary practices to the design, development and evaluation of its election official training programs including how well election officials translated training into practice.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 44:</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in selecting venues for future elections, the VEC factor in the needs of candidates and volunteers (such as toilets, shelter and appropriate spaces for campaigning) as far as possible.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The challenges of finding suitable venues to be used as short-term early voting or election day voting centres has been discussed earlier. The VEC will continue to seek venues that provide the best access for voters covering a range of criteria including wheelchair access and proximity to transport. Other factors such as toilets, shelter and appropriate spaces for campaigning will be considered as far as possible but will be secondary to providing optimum access for voters.</p> |
| Implementation of previous recommendations | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 45:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Electoral Act be amended to allow early votes to be processed, but not inspected, from 8 am on election day. Scrutineers should have the same access to observe this process as they have for current vote processing practices.</p> | <p>The VEC supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Changes to the <i>Electoral Act 2002</i> in 2018 introduced early processing of postal votes from 8 am and early votes from 4 pm on election day under strict restricted area provisions. This was implemented successfully and contributed to the VEC counting 79% of total votes on election night. However, the sorting and reconciliation of increasing numbers of early votes for all districts requires long weekend work to deliver ballot papers to their respective districts for further counting. Earlier access to early votes on election day using the same timeline and restricted access procedures, as for the early processing of postal votes, will assist to optimise election night vote counting.</p> |

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| <p>RECOMMENDATION 46:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Government amend the Electoral Act to prohibit any person or organisation other than the VEC from distributing postal vote applications.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>See the VEC’s response to Recommendation 48.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 47:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Government amend the Electoral Regulations 2012 to remove the requirement for applicants to separately declare that they understand that their name and address may be provided to registered political parties and non-party-aligned candidates.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>The VEC notes the importance of ensuring that electors applying for a postal vote clearly understand that their data will be made available to registered political parties and non-party-aligned candidates.</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 48:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the VEC consider improvements to the way it provides successful postal voter application data to political parties and non-party-aligned candidates at future elections, including providing the data sooner and clearly communicating set times for providing the data.</p> | <p>The VEC notes this recommendation.</p> <p>Consistently since 2010, the VEC continues to be concerned about party involvement in the distribution of postal vote applications. This goes to the issue of the timing of the distribution of applications by political parties and the confusion caused around the source of the application, with many electors feeling deceived in responding to an unsolicited party application from which their personal details will be captured.</p> <p>This said, section 104A of the <i>Electoral Act 2002</i> requires the VEC to provide on request certain information to parties and candidates regarding electors whose postal vote application has been accepted as soon as practicable after ballot material has been issued. In 2018, the VEC provided parties with data at the point where files were extracted from VEC systems either for transmission to the VEC mailhouse for issuing ballot material, or where postal vote numbers were too small to use the mail house and therefore issued from VEC head office. The VEC is unable to establish a set timetable for the provision of this data as the extraction timing varies throughout the election to ensure that all accepted postal vote applications are processed and mailed on the day of receipt. During the last week of postal voting, the regularity of this activity increases in order to ensure as much time as possible for lodgement and delivery of postal ballot material to electors.</p> |
| <p>Reforming the Upper House electoral system</p> | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATION 49:</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Parliament refer an inquiry into possible reforms of the Upper</p> | <p>Not applicable to the VEC.</p> |

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| House electoral system to the Electoral Matters Committee. | |