

Victorian Government Response

Electoral Matters Committee Inquiry into the Future of Victoria's Electoral Administration

1 Introduction

On 7 March 2012, the Electoral Matters Committee, pursuant to section 33(3) of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*, initiated on its own motion an inquiry into the future of Victoria's electoral administration.

The Committee's *Inquiry into the Future of Victoria's Electoral Administration March 2014* was tabled in Parliament on 27 March 2014.

The Committee's Report contains two findings and eight recommendations for change to Victoria's electoral system. This document contains the Victorian Government's response to each of the Committee's findings and recommendations.

2 Victorian Government Response

No	Committee Finding / Recommendation	Victorian Government Response
Early Voting		
Find 2.1	The Committee recognises that early voting is now an established component of Victoria's electoral practice. It provides many Victorians with opportunities to vote which suit their work, social and lifestyle choices. Given that it is likely that rates of early voting in person will continue to increase at future Victorian elections, the Committee supports a two-week early voting period at Victorian elections.	Noted. The Victorian Government notes the Committee's finding.
Rec 2.1	The Committee recommends the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) continue its efforts to conduct research into early voting at Victorian elections, with a specific focus on the effects of early voting on rates of voter turnout at Victorian elections.	The Victorian Government notes that the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has responded directly to the Committee on this recommendation. The Government supports initiatives aimed at increasing voter participation, and giving voters access to a full range of voting options.
Rec 2.2	The Committee recommends the VEC ensure that the location of early voting centres is advertised and marketed appropriately in the lead up to Victorian elections, with a focus on communities in rural and regional Victoria. In conjunction, the Committee also recommends the VEC consider ways to improve signage advertising the location of early voting centres in rural and regional Victoria.	The Victorian Government notes that the VEC has responded directly to the Committee on this recommendation. The Government supports the VEC ensuring that early voting centres are appropriately marketed and advertised, particularly in rural and regional areas.
Informal Voting		
Rec 3.1	The Committee recommends the Victorian Government amend the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) to introduce a system of optional preferential voting (OPV) for Victorian Legislative Assembly elections. In drafting these amendments the Victorian Government should examine the models	Further consideration required. The introduction of OPV would be a substantial change to the Legislative Assembly voting system. While the Government supports initiatives aimed at reducing the rate of informal voting, the potential implications of making such a change

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Rec 3.1 (cont)	of OPV used in NSW and Queensland.	<p>require further consideration, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether other measures, such as undertaking greater levels of public engagement and education would be a more effective way of reducing the rate of informal voting; ▪ The impact of having different voting systems for the Lower Houses of Victoria and the Commonwealth; ▪ The implications on the voting system where a large number of voters do not indicate beyond their first preference, as the votes are exhausted and do not count after the counting of first preferences.

Parliamentary oversight of Victoria's electoral administration

Rec 4.1	The Committee recommends the Victorian Government amend the relevant sections of the <i>Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)</i> to include under the VEC's responsibilities the requirement for the VEC to work with the Parliament of Victoria's Electoral Matters Committee.	<p>Not supported.</p> <p>The Committee and the VEC have worked effectively and co-operatively over many years.</p> <p>The Government strongly supports the continuation of this practice.</p>
Rec 4.2	The Committee recommends the Victorian Government amend the relevant sections of the <i>Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 (Vic)</i> relating to the functions of the Electoral Matters Committee, to prescribe that the Committee should review the VEC's reports to Parliament, and conduct a review of every Victorian state election.	<p>The current arrangements provide flexibility by allowing the Committee to draw on the VEC's expertise, while reflecting the independence of the Electoral Commissioner.</p> <p>Existing provisions allow the Committee to determine its focus and priorities. The Government supports retaining current arrangements.</p>

Election tally room

Rec 5.1	The Committee recommends the VEC discontinues the Victorian state tally room for all future elections, subject to the VEC investigating and reporting to the Committee prior to the 2014 Victorian state election about the viability of establishing a public space for Victorians to congregate to view election results and celebrate Victoria's democracy.	<p>The Victorian Government notes that the VEC has responded directly to the Committee on this recommendation.</p> <p>The Government notes that the VEC is investigating the feasibility of holding a public event to allow the Victorian community to come together to view election results. Since 1999, a tally room has been organised for each Victorian state election. Recent practice from other jurisdictions has been to discontinue the running of tally rooms because new technologies have decreased the need for traditional tally rooms.</p>
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Participation

Rec 6.1	The Committee recommends that the provision of civics education to primary and secondary students in Victoria be considered a priority by the Victorian Government and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in order to ensure that young Victorians develop positive attitudes and perceptions about the value of participation in electoral processes, and their role as citizens in an increasingly globalised world.	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Government supports the provision of civics education to primary and secondary students in Victoria. Unity through Diversity, the Victorian Government's vision for civics, citizenship and multicultural education (released in March 2014) reinforces the role of civics, citizenship and multicultural education in equipping Victorian students to be active and informed citizens –</p>
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No	Committee Finding / Recommendation	Victorian Government Response
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locally, nationally and internationally.

The school curriculum for Victorian students (AusVELS) sets the curriculum for Prep to Year 10. Within AusVELS, the Civics and Citizenship domain articulates the required knowledge, skills and understanding that students should develop in relation to elections, being a citizen in a democracy and a member of a global community. Decisions about how the teaching and learning program is delivered are a matter for individual schools.

Modernising and promoting the Parliament		
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Rec
8.1 The Committee recommends the Victorian Government amend relevant Victorian legislation to introduce the terms 'State Senate' as a reference to the Legislative Council, and 'State Senator' as a reference to a member of the Legislative Council.

Not supported

The Legislative Council has existed in Victoria for over 150 years and is part of the history and traditions of the State. The central role of the Legislative Council in Victoria's parliamentary system is reflected in the Victorian constitution, which uses the term 'Legislative Council'. This is consistent with other states which refer to their Upper House as the 'Legislative Council'.

The Government supports the retention of the term 'Legislative Council' and does not see a need for change. The Government supports other methods to raise the profile for the Legislative Council's work to resolve any confusion in the community.

Find
8.1 While the Committee does not wish to comment on the process of Victoria's electoral redivision, the Committee encourages the Electoral Boundaries Commission to take a consistent approach to the naming of Victoria's electoral Districts, with a particular emphasis on appropriate place names on the basis of geography.

Noted.

The Victorian Government notes the Committee's finding.