

Committee recommends shortened voting period, Upper House reform

The Victorian Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee has recommended a shortened voting period, a code of conduct for candidates and campaigners, better training for electoral officials and reform to the Upper House, in a report tabled in Parliament today.

The cross-party Committee inquired into the conduct of the 2022 Victorian state election, including the experiences of voters, candidates, parties and other stakeholders.

The 2022 election was the largest in the state's history, with record numbers of voters and candidates. With this increasing scale came increasing complexity for the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and others.

"Our overall assessment is that the election was conducted fairly and democratically, though there were some areas where improvements are needed," said Committee Chair Luba Grigorovitch.

The inquiry received more than 100 submissions, held nine days of hearings and consulted with political parties, independent candidates, election officials, voters, representatives of the disability and CALD communities, academics, election experts and others.

The Committee's final report makes 98 recommendations.

The Committee has recommended several adjustments to the election timeline, including shortening the early voting period from 12 to seven days, but with longer hours.

The Committee has called for an independent review of the Victorian Electoral Commission's training processes to ensure staff are familiar with the rules and provide quality service to voters, campaigners and candidates.

The report recommends the introduction of a code of conduct for candidates and campaigners, along with new enforcement powers to address poor behaviour by candidates and campaigners.

It calls for changes to the voting system for the Upper House. The Committee has recommended a similar voting system to the one used for the Commonwealth Senate. This would include eliminating group voting tickets and allowing voters to indicate multiple preferences above the line.

The Committee has also recommended more support for people to enrol and vote, increasing the level of transparency around elections and measures to ensure that elections are fair for all candidates and parties.

“Elections are about giving all Victorians a say in who should represent them in Parliament. We need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote, and that the process is fair, secure, and accurate,” said Ms Grigorovitch.

The government has six months to respond to the report.