Section 9
Recommended service improvements

The following items constitute administrative improvements that do not require legislative amendments.
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Enrolment updates

The VEC seeks endorsement to further research direct elector enrolment update methods.

Early voting centres

With the likelihood of a further increase in early voting in future, the VEC will review the locations of early voting centres, with a commitment to ensuring adequate coverage and resourcing.

In addition, options to extend operating hours at airport voting centres will be examined.

Mobile voting

In future, the VEC will further clarify candidates’ responsibilities in relation to mobile voting to ensure candidates only visit scheduled mobile voting centres prior to the commencement of voting. Additional training will be provided to VEC staff delivering these services. The VEC will also provide clear guidelines regarding mobile voting services and processes to political parties and candidates.

Overseas voting centres

The VEC did experience difficulties with voting services at some overseas voting centres. This included material being delayed in Customs, and the lack of training for some consular election officials. Information technology opportunities to assist in relaying materials will be pursued in the future, as well as the appointment of better trained staff at particular centres.

Voting centre signage

Signage remains an issue for the VEC as it is often faced with council restrictions on the placement of signage in prominent locations such as main roads etc. The organisation will continue to look at options for increased signage at the actual venue, bearing in mind consideration for building owners. In addition, the VEC will look to provide each elector with details of their closest local voting centres in a state-wide mail out.
Display of group voting tickets

The VEC will address the fact that not all voting centres displayed group voting tickets.

Election day voting centres

Queues

All complaints about queues were investigated, with a detailed analysis of the difference between the number of votes estimated for that particular centre and the number of actual votes received. In those areas where there were significant queues, it was found that the number of actual votes was greater than the number estimated. This was particularly true in growth areas, as well as areas that were close to major infrastructure such as the Melbourne Town Hall. In 2010, the VEC will utilise mapping software and other data besides historical information, to better predict the volume of votes likely to be received at each centre.

There is a strong likelihood that the 2010 Victorian state election will be conducted shortly after a Federal election, on current timelines. This will further enable the VEC to be more accurate with estimations.

In addition, online venue location search facilities will clearly indicate those centres located within the elector’s district and those that are not.

Wheelchair access

The VEC received complaints in relation to the lack of wheelchair accessible voting centres. Despite considerable liaison with disability organisations, the VEC was unable to locate and lease many accessible venues. The VEC will continue to liaise with community and disability organisations to identify more suitable venues. In addition, the VEC will liaise with the Department of Education at a more strategic level to seek assistance on sourcing and rating venues.

Joint voting centres

The VEC will continue to utilise joint voting centres in order to reduce declaration voting. The centres will be located close to electoral boundaries.

Communication services

The State election communication campaign will be revised to consider:

- the timing of the stages of various campaigns; with a particular emphasis on advertising early voting prior to the issuing of postal votes. This is to encourage those who can not attend a voting centre on election day to vote early, as opposed to applying for a postal vote; and
- the inclusion of more tailored information, such as a list of voting centres on the EasyVote card.

At this stage it is likely that the basic message and visuals from the 2006 advertising campaign will be used in 2010. Savings will be diverted to more targeted advertising.

Media releases

In future, the VEC will distribute media releases more broadly to obtain improved media coverage. This will include any individual media contacts, rather than rely on AAP’s Medianet coverage.

Tally room

Prior to the 2010 State election, in conjunction with the political parties, the VEC will assess the demand for the continuation of the tally room. Consideration will be given to the media needs, result services and access for the general public.

Computer counting

The VEC will continue to investigate the feasibility of utilising scanning technology to replace the requirement to data enter ballot paper details for computer counting purposes. In doing so, the VEC will look at options to improve transparency for scrutineers and candidates.
Personnel

More staff in voting centres
Additional staff will be appointed to assist not only in addressing queues, but also the long hours required on election weekend.

Election Manager appointments
The VEC will generally restrict the number of districts allocated to Election Managers to two districts per manager. In rural areas where distance is a significant factor, one district offices will apply. The VEC has not ruled out the establishment of a three district office, although this would only occur in exceptional circumstances.

Region counts
The VEC will appoint designated region Election Managers who will manage ballot papers and the count, without any other district responsibilities. While this will have budget implications, it will result in a quicker and more accurate count.

Informal Legislative Council votes
In light of the informal ballot paper survey, the VEC will investigate alternative design opportunities, to ensure the instructions on the ballot paper are clear.