Section 10
Counting the votes
Counting the votes

Counting on Election Day

Counting of votes commenced on election night after the close of voting at 6.00pm. Ordinary votes issued in Election Day voting centres were counted in voting centres. Three counts were conducted as follows:

1. First preference count — Legislative Assembly
2. Two candidate preferred count — Legislative Assembly
3. First preference count — Legislative Council

After the counting of first-preference votes for the Legislative Assembly, a two-candidate-preferred count was conducted, with preferences distributed to the two candidates considered 'most likely' to be in the lead after the distribution of preferences. The purpose of the two-candidate-preferred count was to provide an early indication of the result of the election, and also to provide detailed information for political parties and analysts. The final voting centre count conducted on election night was the first-preference count for the Legislative Council.

Counting of postal votes commenced at 6.00pm on election night in election offices. Also commencing at 6.00pm, early votes were sorted to their correct district and region and reconciled on election night in preparation for the declaration exchange.

Seventy percent of all postal votes were counted on election weekend. With the exception of Bentleigh District, early votes that did not need to be forwarded to other electorates were counted on the Monday following Election Day. Counting of early votes for Bentleigh District was commenced on Sunday, as the Electoral Commissioner considered the outcome of this seat was pivotal to the overall election result.

Declaration votes

Declaration votes are all votes other than ordinary votes (those cast by electors voting at a centre appointed for their own district on Election Day). They are called declaration votes because the elector makes a declaration stating their entitlement to vote. There are several types of declaration votes, and the method of processing each type differs.

Postal votes are cast by electors who have applied to vote by post and have been mailed ballot papers by the VEC. The elector places the ballot papers in the declaration envelope and posts it to the VEC. The postal vote declarations are forwarded to the appropriate election office, where the elector’s signature on the declaration is checked against the application.

Early votes are cast at early voting centres before Election Day. The elector makes a verbal declaration that he or she is eligible to cast an early vote. Early votes cast outside the elector’s district are forwarded after Election Day to the appropriate election office for counting.

Absent votes are cast by voters at voting centres outside their own Districts on Election Day. Most absent votes are included in declaration envelopes, but where absent votes are issued from voting centres with access to an electronic copy of the State-wide roll, ballot papers are combined for the same electorate and enclosed in specially designed envelopes. After Election Day, the envelopes containing absent ballot papers are sent to the appropriate Election Managers.

Elector who are found to have already been marked on the roll when they attend to vote complete a ‘Marked as voted’ declaration stating that they have not voted previously at this election. These are verified before being either included into the count or rejected.

Postal votes that were postmarked Sunday, 28 November, were checked for the date the declaration was witnessed. If the declaration was witnessed on or before Election Day, the postal vote was admitted for further scrutiny in accordance with new provisions included in the Electoral Act 2002 in 2010.

Provisional votes are cast by voters who complete a provisional enrolment/vote form and vote on the day. After Election Day, the provisional enrolment/vote envelopes - including the ballot papers - are sent to the VEC to check whether the voter is entitled to be enrolled and to vote. They are then returned to the appropriate election office with advice on entitlement.

Legislative changes were made in 2010 enabling people who could prove their identity to enrol on-the-day to cast a provisional vote if their name could not be found on the roll anywhere in Victoria. After Election Day, provisional vote applications were checked to ensure electors were eligible to enrol, prior to the votes being admitted for further scrutiny.

The introduction of on-the-day enrolment and provisional voting meant that there were no un-enrolled declaration votes in 2010. The number of not-on-roll absent and early votes was greatly reduced as access to a whole of State roll enabled Election Officials to check whether electors were enrolled prior to issuing one of these types of votes.

The VEC processed 36,810 declaration votes, 34,546 on-the-day enrolment provisional votes and 2,264 early and absent votes where elector details could not initially be found on the roll. This figure is a decrease on the 74,403 declaration votes at the 2006 State election. Figure 48 shows the numbers of declaration votes checked by the VEC and the number admitted to the count.
### Preferences distributions

Preference distributions to determine the result of an election are required in each Legislative Assembly district where no candidate obtains an absolute majority (more than 50 per cent) of the first-preference votes. Preference distributions were conducted in 44 Districts.

Following the re-check, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is excluded, and votes for that candidate are distributed to the remaining candidates according to the preferences on the excluded candidate’s ballot papers. This process continues until one candidate obtains an absolute majority of the formal votes.

In 13 Districts, the preference distribution reached a result while there were still more than two candidates remaining.

### Two-party-preferred counts

The VEC conducted six two-party-preferred (2PP) counts for the 2010 State election. The purpose of the 2PP count was to show, for each district and for the State as a whole, how the vote was divided between the ALP and the Liberal and National parties, taking into account the preferences of people who vote for minor parties and independents.

The VEC used two candidate preferred (2CP) or preference distribution results for many Districts but conducted 2PP counts where 2CP or preference distribution results did not show how the vote was divided between the ALP and the Liberal and National parties. There were eight such counts required after the 2006 State election.

The 2PP counts took place once all counting in each district had been completed. Further details are included in the section on analysis of results in this report.

### Counting after Election Day

Further primary counts were carried out after Election Day, when Election Managers received declaration votes from other electorates or the postal voting centre and completed any processing required before counting. By Thursday 2 December, five days after Election Day, 93.6% of all primary counts had been completed.

### Rechecks

All district and region ballot papers were further rechecked by election officials following the completion of primary counting. Results were adjusted following each recheck to correct any discrepancies in counting or sorting identified during the recheck process.

### Online roll mark off

The VEC developed an application that enabled election staff to query the entire State roll and in real time, mark off electors as having voted. The application was rolled out during the early voting period and on Election Day using 1,080 netbooks. Nearly 350 netbooks were used at early voting centres and around 550,000 early votes were processed. On Election Day, the VEC used more than 750 netbooks linked back to the VEC over the Telstra NextG wireless network. The online roll mark-off application was used to process almost 200,000 absent and ordinary votes.
District recounts

No recounts were requested or required in any of the 88 Legislative Assembly Districts.

Region count

First-preference votes for the Legislative Council were counted at voting centres and at election offices on election night. All first-preference counts for region ballot papers took place in the district.

For the 2010 State election, the VEC established one Region Recheck Centre in each of the eight Regions. On completion of the first-preference count, and commencing the Monday after Election Day, all region ballot papers held in each district election office in the State, up to and including election night, were transferred to one of the eight Region Recheck Centres. A full recheck of all region ballot papers took place in the Region Recheck Centres. During the recheck, all votes were kept in their particular parcels. No amalgamation of votes took place at the Region Recheck Centre. Each individual ballot paper was checked for correct sorting and all ballot papers were recounted.

As the recheck was completed, the ballot papers marked below-the-line were separated from those marked above-the-line and from informal ballot papers. Individual parcels containing below-the-line ballot papers were transferred to the centralised computer-count centre at Etihad Stadium commencing Friday, 3 December with the final transfer of below-the-line ballot papers taking place on Thursday, 9 December.

All formal ballot papers marked above-the-line, and informal ballot papers remained in the Region Recheck Centres. If a recount had been required, these ballot papers would have been transported to the computer-count centre. Reconciliation of all below-the-line ballot papers was undertaken at the computer-count centre for each parcel of votes. Once reconciled, the below-the-line ballot papers were batched in preparation for data entry into the VEC’s computer-count application. No amalgamation of votes took place in the computer-count centre.

Three teams of 20 data-entry operators were established for the computerized count. Each team was responsible for data-entry of ballot papers for two or more Regions. The computer-count application identified ballot papers deemed to be informal during data-entry. Once data-entry had been completed for each batch of ballot papers, the informal papers were passed to the informal checking team for further scrutiny and if declared to be informal by the Election Manager were removed from the batch and counted as informal papers.

All below-the-line ballot papers were entered into the computer count application twice. The computer-count application identified any discrepancies between first round and second round data entry. The data entry operator was able to review the preferences entered and, if incorrectly entered, rectify the issue prior to saving the preferences from the ballot paper.
Once all below-the-line ballot papers had been data entered a second time, the total number of above-the-line ticket votes for each group for each voting centre or declaration parcel of votes was uploaded into the computer-count system. The total ticket votes for each voting centre or declaration parcel of votes consisted of the above-the-line ballot papers held at the Region Recheck Centre, plus the number of above-the-line ballot papers identified at the count centre.

Once all above-the-line and below-the-line data had been entered into the computer-count application for each region, the total number of informal ballot papers for each region was uploaded into the system by voting centre or declaration parcel of votes. The total informal votes comprised of those held at the Region Recheck Centre, and those identified at the computer count centre.

Once all ballot papers to be included in the calculation of results had been included in the computer-count application, a final reconciliation of all ballot papers for each region took place prior to the results being calculated. Scrutineers were able to observe all aspects of the count.

The calculation of results commenced at 12.00noon on Tuesday, 14 December. The results were calculated in alphabetical order. All eight calculations were completed by approximately 1.00pm. Results were published as ‘provisional’ awaiting the declaration of results at 4.00pm Wednesday, 15 December.

### Computer count

For the 2010 Region (Upper House) count, the VEC implemented wide-ranging changes to the processes to handle, manage and track the Upper House ballot papers. The VEC’s computer-count application was enhanced to support these new processes.

The VEC also developed a new application to manage the tracking, reconciliation, creation and processing of ballot papers and carried out extensive testing in preparation for the count. The software was used successfully during the Upper House count at Etihad Stadium.

### Count process summary and transparency

Scrubineers are permitted to be present at all stages of counting. For the Legislative Assembly, preliminary first-preference counts were conducted in voting centres and election offices. All ballot papers were further rechecked for correct sorting and counting. All Legislative Assembly results were progressively displayed on the VEC website. For the Legislative Council, preliminary first-preference counts, above and below-the-line were conducted in voting centres and in election offices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District total</th>
<th>Region total</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Metropolitan 401,210</td>
<td>401,076</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Victoria 428,895</td>
<td>428,752</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Metropolitan 413,267</td>
<td>413,270</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-0.0007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Victoria 400,878</td>
<td>400,893</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern Metropolitan 411,997</td>
<td>411,697</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Metropolitan 391,624</td>
<td>391,440</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Metropolitan 443,310</td>
<td>443,257</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Victoria 438,684</td>
<td>438,476</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 50: Comparison of numbers of ballot papers counted, Districts and Regions

Prior to calculating provisional upper-house results, all candidates and registered political parties were provided with the opportunity to collect a comprehensive set of reconciliation reports including:
- Full region reconciliation reports showing the total votes expected in the count for each region
- Ticket allocation reports showing the number of ballot papers marked above the line for each group and the preference allocation according to their ticket
- Primary region results by voting centre and other vote types for all Regions
- Rechecked region results by voting centre and other vote types for all Regions
- Primary district results by voting centre and other vote types for all Districts
- Rechecked district results by voting centre and other vote types for all Districts
- A comparison of total district and region votes by voting centre and other vote types, including totals for District Primary, District 2CP, District Recheck, Region Primary and Region Recheck
- Rejected declaration votes by district
- Statewide two-party preferred result

Following the calculation of provisional results for each region on Tuesday 14 December, the full distribution of preferences for each region was made available for interested parties for review. The reports were also available on the VEC website.

No requests for recounts were received prior to the formal declaration of the result for each region on Wednesday, 15 December.

### The return of the writs

The writs for the State election were returned on Friday, 17 December 2010 to the Lieutenant Governor, The Honourable Chief Justice, Marilyn Warren AC.