Section 5
Communication services
The VEC commenced its communication campaign one month prior to the issue of the writ, with an extensive public awareness campaign.

The objectives of the 2010 communication campaign were to:

- Maximise new enrolments and enrolment updates prior to the close of the roll
- Maximise the level of voter participation for the election
- Minimise the level of informal voting
- Encourage early voting among key target audiences
- Provide timely, clear and accurate information services to candidates
- Provide accurate, clear and accessible information to the public and media
- Communicate accurate, accessible and timely election results
- Maximise public awareness of voting innovations
- Maintain/increase public confidence in the VEC’s ability to conduct elections
- Increase level of electronically assisted voting participation

The campaign involved a State-wide mail-out, press, radio, television, outdoor advertising, a telephone enquiry service, media relations, community presentations and outreach services, publications, social media and the VEC’s website. Audience-specific strategies targeted the following groups:

- Young electors 17–34 years of age
- Electors with a disability
- Users of electronically assisted voting systems
- CALD electors
- Frail/elderly electors
- Indigenous electors
- People experiencing homelessness
- Interstate or overseas electors
- Media and journalists

Media representatives were invited to a number of briefings, and arrangements to provide information in short time-frames were established.

EasyVote Guide

The most significant form of election communication for the 2010 State election was the direct mail of an EasyVote Guide to every elector on the roll at the close of roll. The EasyVote Guide was a four page, A4 document detailing:

- The election date
- Early, postal and electronically assisted voting options
- Information on how to vote correctly for both houses of Parliament
- Language lines and the election hotline number
- An offer for SMS text voting reminders
- The location of every early voting centre and Election Day voting centre within the elector’s district, along with the applicable accessibility rating of those voting centres

The EasyVote Guide included a detachable EasyVote Card containing an elector ID for voting centres using Netbooks, and for voting centres where manual marking of the roll was required, the scannable roll page number and the position on the page, where the elector’s details could be found. This assisted with faster elector roll mark off. The redevelopment of the EasyVote Guide, particularly the inclusion of voting locations was in direct response to market research feedback from the 2006 State election.

Focus group testing on the EasyVote Guide proved extremely positive and the market research indicates that almost 70% of ordinary, absent and CALD voters recalled content from the EasyVote Guide. The EasyVote Guide was less effective for early voters and postal voters who needed to vote prior to receiving the publication in most instances.

In an effort to engage Victorian electors in the United Kingdom, the 2010 State election advertising campaign used targeted advertising across both print and online media.

In early October, large print ads were placed in two issues of TNT magazine, a free publication for travellers in the UK. These ads were supported by online banner advertisements throughout November on the TNT website. The VEC used IP address matching to target Victorians in the UK who accessed popular Victorian news sites such as heraldsun.com.au and theage.com.au. Banner ads were placed on facebook and only shown to people who were registered as over 18, born in Australia and who were accessing facebook from the United Kingdom.
Figure 16: Over 3.5 million EasyVote Guides were printed, with one being sent to every elector
Advertising campaign

Following a competitive tendering process, the VEC appointed Grey Global to adapt the 2002 and 2006 State election advertising campaign, Every vote will shape Victoria, for the 2010 State election. Advertising was designed to address key topics such as enrolment, voting locations and how to vote, and was delivered in phases related to the election timeline, key dates and events (see Figure 17). Sample advertisements can be found in Appendix 9. Figure 18 compares the costs of the election advertising campaigns for the last three elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enrolment</td>
<td>3 October - 9 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Information for candidates</td>
<td>3 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Motivational</td>
<td>14-26 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Early voting</td>
<td>11-26 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Candidate listings</td>
<td>20 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How to vote correctly</td>
<td>21-27 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Where to vote on Election Day</td>
<td>22-27 November 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17: Advertising phases, 2010 Victorian State election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost Metro</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>Ethnic</th>
<th>Outdoor*</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Other**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$2,217,746</td>
<td>$1,798,925</td>
<td>$277,979</td>
<td>$140,842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$2,837,288</td>
<td>$2,073,834</td>
<td>$422,054</td>
<td>$178,187</td>
<td>$152,625</td>
<td>$10,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$2,793,083</td>
<td>$1,934,912</td>
<td>$336,053</td>
<td>$305,908</td>
<td>$86,951</td>
<td>$121,882</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18: Advertising costs, 2010 Victorian State election

* Includes airport  ** Includes street press, seniors press and Indigenous media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Television</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$361,304</td>
<td>$139,329 (38.56%)</td>
<td>$106,596 (29.50%)</td>
<td>$115,379 (31.93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$336,053</td>
<td>$131,316 (39.01%)</td>
<td>$54,297 (16.16%)</td>
<td>$150,439 (44.77%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19: Regional advertising spending by media type, 2010 Victorian State election

*Excludes the cost of advertising in State-wide media circulated or broadcast in Regional Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Retailers of Asian goods, Channel 31</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$178,187</td>
<td>$107,627 (60.4%)</td>
<td>$70,560 (39.6%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$305,908</td>
<td>$179,324 (58.62%)</td>
<td>$74,384 (24.32%)</td>
<td>13860</td>
<td>$38,340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 20: Advertising targeting CALD electors spending by media, 2010 Victorian State election
Communication services for voters from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Early in 2010, the VEC established an Advisory Group consisting of representatives from organisations working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Various election communication and education initiatives were suggested by and canvassed with the Advisory Group.

Four media releases in 28 languages were distributed to 93 different ethnic publications throughout October and November, while paid advertising in 22 languages ran in 45 ethnic publications and on seven radio stations. Details of spending for advertising directed at CALD electors is presented in Figure 20.

Key information in 22 languages plus English was provided on the VEC website. A translated enrolment form was available in 20 languages. Audio files in two further languages were available to assist those people experiencing difficulty with literacy in those languages. CALD electors also had access via the website to the VEC’s interactive virtual voting experience (18 languages plus English), originally produced for the 2006 State election. This provided a voting simulation and a demonstration of how to complete Upper and Lower House ballot papers. Information kits were mailed to 984 CALD community groups (see Community Education and Engagement section of this report).

Multi-language voting instructions were printed on the elector-facing panel of all standard and wheelchair height voting screens at voting centres, and multi-lingual election officials were clearly identified, wearing a sticker indicating the language spoken.

Advertising in ethnic and English print media included the VEC’s 20 multi-lingual telephone enquiry service numbers that operate all year round. Callers who dialled a language-specific number heard a message on a selection of election-related topics and could then opt to speak through an interpreter with a telephone enquiry service operator. Details of calls received via language specific numbers and requests for interpreter services are included in Appendix 10.

Website

The VEC developed an election-specific landing page (131vec.com.au) designed to complement the 131 VEC (131 832) telephone enquiry service number, to enable better recall through advertising and to increase access and visits to the site. Linked icons on this landing page took site visitors directly to information for each stage of the election. Just over 190,000 page visits were registered during October and November 2010.

A link from the landing page to a page for overseas electors was included in response to feedback from that elector group. Information about where to vote and the availability of online checking of enrolment details were the most popular pages, followed by how to vote outside your electorate, general State election information and downloadable enrolment forms.

The VEC also provided a free software application, BrowseAloud, on its website for download. The application reads website text and PDFs to website users.

Links to the State election web pages were included on the VEC homepage. During the month of November, the VEC had just over 600,000 page visits to its homepage. The site averaged just over 11,000 unique visits each day from the Monday to Friday prior to Election Day and 21,163 unique visits on Election Day.

Voting centre search facility

The website also included a voting centre search facility, to identify and locate early voting centres and Election Day voting centres. After an address was entered, a search returned the details of the five voting centres nearest that address or (prior to Election Day) two early voting centres. Details included the voting centre address, Melways map and reference, accessibility rating, details of any access limitations, and noted whether the voting centre was within the electoral district related to that address. Electors could also search by locality or postcode, which proved helpful for those away from their enrolled address on Election Day.

Over the campaign period 211,353 search requests were recorded. This is a slight decrease on the 206,000 odd hits for the service in 2006. On Election day 30,840 hits were recorded, similar to the 2006 total of 33,195. It is possible this decrease is attributable to the introduction of the Vote Victoria app which recorded 2,727 downloads on Election Day, and the inclusion of voting centres on the EasyVote Guide.
Telephone enquiry service

The VEC outsourced (by tender) its Telephone Enquiry Service (TES) project. The TES dealt effectively and efficiently with the large number of calls received during the election, operating for nine weeks, from Monday, 27 September, to Wednesday, 1 December. Operating hours were 9.00am–5.30pm weekdays (8.00pm on close of roll), 9.00am–2.00pm on Saturday, 13 and 20 November, and 8.00am–6.00pm on Saturday, 27 November.

To address concerns that call numbers could approach 250,000-300,000, an initial message directed callers to the VEC website. The TES received 106,784 calls during the election period (compared with 227,246 in 2006 and 129,774 in 2002). Up to 90 trained operators were available to answer calls at peak times. The VEC provided training and online information to operators to enable them to answer questions quickly and accurately regarding:

- how and where to enrol
- Election Manager contact details and how to nominate as a candidate
- the location of interstate and overseas voting centres
- how to vote by post or in person before Election Day
- the location of mobile early voting centres
- voting on Election Day

The more complex calls were handled by team leaders. Any enquiry requiring more detail was referred to a VEC representative and, if required, could be transferred to the VEC’s head office for final resolution of the matter.

All State election advertising publicised the 131VEC (131 832) hotline number. Interpreter lines for 20 languages other than English were also advertised on the bottom of print advertisements and on the EasyVote Guide. Notably, all advertising generated large increases in the volume of calls received in the period immediately following publication or broadcast.

SMS enrolment and reminder service

In response to Recommendation 3.3 of the Electoral Matters Committee report on the conduct of the 2006 State election, the VEC investigated the feasibility of short messaging service (SMS) text enrolment, an SMS enrolment and reminder services. The VEC considered that trialling of the services at this election was practicable to determine their feasibility at future elections.

As this was a new communication field for the VEC, the organisation opted to partner with an experienced company that had been recommended by Telstra — Ad I.Q. The SMS strategy had two phases. Voters could request an enrolment form by SMS during the enrolment period. Later in the campaign, voters could register for a series of voting reminders — for the early voting period and two on Election Day itself. Registration for the SMS reminder service could be achieved by SMS text or online.

In direct response to SMS requests, 762 enrolment forms were distributed, and a post-election analysis revealed that 57% of these resulted in new or updated enrolments. A total of 5,466 requests for an SMS reminder were received, peaking on election eve with 893 requests in a single 24 hour period. A portion of the reminder service users could be characterised as ‘active’ SMS users, as several hundred had manually opted out between the morning and afternoon reminders.

Key to the success of the SMS project was the fact that both phases (enrolment and reminder) were highlighted in the mainstream communications campaign. An analysis of advertising schedules against incoming SMS requests showed that use rates peaked for all media within moments of ads being seen. Television was the most successful medium, outdoor advertising was the weakest.

Encouraging enrolment via SMS was somewhat successful. However, legislative amendments enabling automatic enrolment, plus the fact that the manual distribution of paper forms was required when there is a range of quicker and more sustainable options available, mean that the VEC is unlikely to pursue this again.

The reminder service was significantly more popular, required very little in the way of resources and is likely to be continued. The service can be offered free if people register for it online, (SMS registration has a fee attached) and could be integrated with other VEC communication tools, such as the VEC facebook page or iPhone application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls received</th>
<th>Calls answered</th>
<th>Left after message</th>
<th>Abandoned</th>
<th>Diverted to voicemail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>129,774</td>
<td>99,743 (77%)</td>
<td>24,833 (19%)</td>
<td>5,198 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>227,246</td>
<td>128,090 (56%)</td>
<td>73,379 (32%)</td>
<td>25,777 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>106,784</td>
<td>73,939 (69%)</td>
<td>30,645 (29%)</td>
<td>2,103 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21: Service levels at the Telephone Enquiry Service, Victorian State elections 2002-2010
Vote Victoria (iPhone application)

The VEC helped to define an iPhone application (app) concept, which was developed by Information Victoria as a test case for government/private partnerships with consulting firm Deloitte.

Focusing on iPhone, the most widely used platform, and limiting the functionality to three key features: a GPS assisted voting centre locator, a page for general electoral information and a method to access live results, Vote Victoria was listed in the iTunes App Store on 18 November. Vote Victoria was downloaded 5,165 times during the ten days it was live, and its average review score on iTunes was 4.5 of a possible 5 stars.

Feedback focused almost entirely on the nature of the election results. The iPhone app was consistent with the VEC’s physical and online tallyrooms. However, differences between the official results from the VEC and results as interpreted by media commentators caused some confusion. Vote Victoria capitalised on current technology trends to provide a simple, yet effective service to a wide audience.
Social media – facebook and YouTube

Recognising that social media has an increasing place in communication, particularly with young people (one of the VEC’s target groups), the VEC decided to launch an official presence on the social media platforms facebook and YouTube. This was seen as a cost effective way of delivering campaign messages to an increasingly transient audience that may not be reached by the mainstream campaign.

The sites were constantly monitored to ensure all content supported the VEC’s objective — to create greater awareness of the election and provide key election information.

The official VEC facebook page and YouTube channel were launched on 23 September 2010. By Election Day, the facebook page had 117 followers with 75 checking the VEC’s posts daily. The VEC’s facebook page and YouTube channel were not included in the mainstream campaign, but promoted by VEC staff to contacts and friends. On 15 October, linked icons were included in the footer of the VEC’s website.

There were 6,007 views of VEC posts to the facebook page during the campaign, and the underlying strategy of ‘informing without challenging’ was a success. Feedback from users was posted 22 times during the campaign, none of which was negative, partial or inappropriate. No user posts had to be removed.

Use of the VEC’s social media pages was very small compared with the mainstream communications campaign. However, the low cost of administering social media sites and the nature of user base growth suggests that it is a field that should not be overlooked in future communication plans. The VEC’s facebook page and YouTube channel are still being maintained. Use has slowed since the election, however, user numbers continue to increase.