Section 7
Services to registered political parties and candidates
The VEC conducted a number of briefing sessions for registered political parties prior to the State election. Representatives from 10 of the 11 registered political parties attended these sessions, receiving information on:

- The VEC’s preparations for the election
- Changes to legislation
- The role of Election Managers
- Postal voting arrangements
- Nomination procedures
- The registration of how-to-vote cards and group voting tickets
- The VEC’s voter information campaign
- Complaints procedures
- Public funding of election expenses

Further information provided to registered political parties included lists of voting centres and joint voting centres with geo-codes, estimated voter numbers for each voting centre, interstate and overseas voting locations and region ballot paper colours.

A number of registered political parties took up the VEC’s invitation to attend a demonstration on the VEC’s electronically assisted voting facility during October.

An information session for independent candidates covering key timelines and procedures was held on Sunday, 7 November. Approximately 50 prospective candidates attended this session.

During the election period, the VEC published regular circulars for registered political parties and Legislative Council candidates. Election Managers had responsibility for keeping Legislative Assembly candidates informed of specific election activities and timelines.

Postal voting protocol

The VEC met with registered political parties in the lead-up to the State election. A major discussion item was the production and distribution of postal vote applications by registered political parties. Section 101 of the Electoral Act 2002 allows for a person other than the Commission to reproduce a postal vote application form and include it with other written material issued by that person or organisation. Historically, the three major registered political parties have produced and distributed postal vote applications during State elections.

At the 2010 State election, three major parties and one independent candidate produced and distributed postal vote applications.

Prior to the 2006 State election, in order to minimise elector confusion about the origin of the application (i.e. whether it was from the VEC or a political party), the VEC introduced a protocol to provide guidance on the production and distribution of postal vote applications. The VEC protocol was again distributed to all registered political parties for the 2010 State election to help ensure that the following principles be observed. The postal vote application:

- Must contain the information detailed in Form K of the Electoral Regulations 2002
- Must not contain any political comment
- Must clearly identify the party or candidate distributing the application
- Must not contain a VEC logo
- May be distributed with other political information
- Must not contain any information that could be considered to be misleading
- Must be sent to the Victorian Electoral Commission promptly upon completion

To assist parties with the production of their postal vote applications, the VEC provided each registered political party with a template for a postal vote application to be used during the State election.

Parties and candidates were encouraged to discuss their proposed templates, including the envelopes, with the VEC prior to printing and distribution. All applications distributed by parties clearly indicated to electors that the mailing address for the completed application was back to the particular party. Applications distributed by the independent candidate were returned directly to the VEC.

A high number of postal vote applications processed by the VEC were ‘party specific’ applications. The VEC made arrangements with parties and candidates to ensure that the VEC received completed postal vote applications submitted to party offices as soon as possible on the day of receipt to ensure same day despatch of ballot material to electors. The VEC noted there were some delays in the receipt of completed applications from parties that led to delays in the despatch of ballot material. In some instances, this also resulted in electors submitting multiple applications to vote by post.
Information for candidates

Handbooks were produced for candidates and scrutineers. The handbooks were available from the VEC, election offices, at the information session for independent candidates and via the VEC’s website. Changes to legislation, along with feedback received following the 2006 State election was considered in the development of material provided to candidates and scrutineers. The VEC provided candidate handbooks to political parties for distribution to independent candidates.

Register of political parties

The Electoral Act 2002 requires the VEC to establish and maintain a register of political parties. In order to qualify for registration, a political party must have a written constitution and at least 500 members who are Victorian electors, party members in accordance with the party’s rules, and not members of another registered political party or of a party applying for registration.

It is not compulsory for political parties to be registered to contest an election, but registration gives a party a number of important entitlements, including:

- The right to have the party’s name on ballot papers
- A requirement to nominate candidates and register how-to-vote cards centrally with the VEC
- Access to enrolment and voter information on a periodic basis
- Public funding for parties obtaining enough votes

There are 11 registered political parties in Victoria, 10 of which contested the 2010 election.

The nomination process

The VEC advertised for nominations prominently in all daily newspapers throughout Victoria on the day after the writ was issued. Election Managers provided prospective candidates with an information kit that included:

- Election Manager’s contact details
- District or region nomination form
- Appointment of a Scrutineer form
- Electoral Roll confidentiality agreement
- Candidate Handbook
- Scrutineer Handbook
- VEC’s how-to-vote card protocol
- How-to-vote card declaration form
- List of voting centres for the relevant district or region
- List of interstate and overseas voting locations
- Details of the number of issuing points at each voting centre in the district or region and an estimate of the number of votes expected to be cast
- District or region fact sheet
- Map of the electorate
- Forms related to group registration and lodgement of group voting tickets for region candidates

Electors Managers offered to meet with each candidate as soon as possible after the acceptance of the candidate’s nomination, in order to outline the election process and clarify any other matters.

Registered political parties were required to submit nominations directly to the VEC in either hardcopy or electronic form. Registered political parties were provided with an electronic application for recording of nominations for each district and region. This enabled parties to enter the nominations onto a USB key, which was directly loaded onto the VEC’s Election Management System by VEC staff. The information was then checked against the hardcopy signed nominations.

The VEC provided independent candidates with a facility to complete a nomination form online. Candidates were guided through each part of the nomination form and could check and change details before final submission. Once the candidate was satisfied with their form, they could print the online form to lodge with the Election Manager. By scanning the barcode on the nomination form at the time of lodgement, details as entered by the candidate were loaded directly into the VEC’s Election Management System. This streamlined the processing of nominations and reduced waiting times for candidates.

The close of nominations was midday, 11 November, 2010 for candidates endorsed by registered political parties, and midday, 12 November for other candidates. Appendix 14 contains a list of candidates for the 2010 State election.

Nominations

The VEC received a record 711 nominations for the 2010 Victorian State election, a slight increase on the 707 candidates in 2006. There were 502 candidates for the 88 Legislative Assembly (Lower House) Districts compared with 459 in 2006, and for the eight Legislative Council (Upper House) Regions, 209 candidates stood; a decrease from 248 in 2006.

A total of 624 candidates were endorsed by registered political parties, slightly fewer than in 2006 when there were 644 endorsed candidates. Eighty-seven candidates stood as independents, compared with 63 at the 2006 election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th># Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Greens</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Party</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family First</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Labor Party</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Alliance</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Party</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nationals</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Democratic Party</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Alliance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 39: Number of candidates endorsed by political parties, 2010 Victorian State election.
Group registration and group voting tickets — Legislative Council

Two or more candidates nominating for the same region in the Legislative Council can request that their names be grouped on the ballot paper in a specified order. Group registration closed at midday, Thursday, 11 November, the same time as close of nominations for registered political parties. A total of 57 groups were registered across the eight Regions compared with 69 in 2006. Eastern Victoria, South Eastern Metropolitan, Western Metropolitan and Western Victoria Regions had the least, with six groups registered in each region. Northern Metropolitan Region had the highest number of groups for a region, with 10 groups registered.

A total of 52 groups were from registered political parties and 5 groups were registered by independent candidates. The Liberal and National Party registered combined groups in Eastern, Northern and Western Victoria Regions. Two independent candidates remained ungrouped.

All registered groups lodged group voting tickets with the VEC by midday on Sunday, 14 November, in accordance with the legislation. None of the groups chose to lodge multiple group voting tickets.

How-to-vote card registration

Registered how-to-vote cards (HTVC) are the only form of printed electoral material that can be lawfully handed out, distributed or otherwise made available within 400 metres of a voting centre on Election Day. Any candidate, person or organisation can register a HTVC. HTVCs carried by mobile early voting teams must also be registered.

A change to the Electoral Act 2002 required the VEC to publish all registered HTVCs on its website for this election. Information about the registration of HTVCs was provided:

- To registered political parties at briefings held prior to the State election
- To independent candidates attending the information session on 7 November
- To candidates by Election Managers directly and in the Candidate’s Information Kit
- On the VEC website

The registration period for HTVCs was from Monday, 15 November, to midday on Friday, 19 November. A total of 1,101 HTVCs were registered for this election compared to 672 in 2006. All registered HTVCs were available at the VEC head office in Little Collins Street, Melbourne and were published on the VEC website in accordance with new legislation. A total of 1,081 HTVCs were registered by registered political parties or candidates and 20 cards were registered by other individuals or interest groups.

How to vote cards on the VEC website

The VEC developed a solution using its high speed scanners and the EMS database to help with the efficient administration and production of HTVCs on the VEC website.

The VEC processed more than 1,000 HTVCs during the registration period. The technology enabled the VEC to meet the legislative timelines and publish the information on the website.

Provision of electoral rolls to candidates

Each candidate in the 2010 State election was provided with the opportunity to obtain an electronic copy of the electoral roll for their relevant electorate, as allowed in legislation. Two text files were provided, which could be opened easily in Microsoft Excel, one in address order and one in name order. These were emailed on Saturday 13 November 2010, with instructions, to candidates whose nomination was finalised, confidentiality agreement signed and a valid email address provided. Thirty-three candidates used this service.

The seven day close of roll date restricts the time available for production of rolls for candidates. In conjunction with the task of processing the large number of enrolments received, the VEC was not able to provide rolls for candidates and political parties until 13 November. Requests for this information had been received by this time, for the purpose of campaigning.

The rolls were printed at the earliest possible time, beginning the weekend after the roll closed. The production of the hard copy rolls took five days of non-stop production, and the rolls were then distributed around the State. In order to produce the rolls earlier, legislative amendments would be required.
Public funding of election expenditure

The Electoral Act 2002 provides for the public funding of election expenses incurred by registered political parties and candidates contesting Victorian State elections.

For the Legislative Assembly (Lower House), registered political parties and independent candidates that receive four per cent or more of first-preference votes are entitled to public funding for each first-preference vote received. At the 2010 Victorian State election public funding was set at $1.4849 per first-preference vote. For the Legislative Council (Upper House), in each region, any candidate in a group or as an independent who receives four per cent or more of first-preference votes is also entitled to public funding. The number of first-preference votes obtained by the first-named candidate in a group is determined by adding the above-the-line votes for that group to the number of first-preferences recorded below-the-line for the first-named candidate to calculate the entitlement.

In the case of a candidate endorsed by a registered political party, payment is made to the registered officer of the relevant political party. In the case of a candidate not endorsed by a registered political party, payment is made to the candidate. Payment is dependent upon the VEC receiving an audited Statement of Expenditure (SOE), and an audit certificate that states that the auditor received full access to information and has no reason to believe that any matter in the SOE is incorrect.

Where the audited SOE shows that not less than the entitlement has been spent, a payment of $1.4849 for each first-preference vote received is made. Where the SOE reveals that an amount less than the entitlement has been spent, payment is for the amount specified in the SOE.

The deadline for applications for the funding of election expenses was 16 April, 2011. The VEC made payments of the entitlement within three working days of receipt of an audited SOE.