Section 8
Services to the media
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The media remains the primary source of electoral information for most Victorians. In an effort to ensure this information was as accurate and timely as possible, the VEC provided a range of services to the media including; briefing sessions, a media handbook, a dedicated media centre on the website, the distribution of media releases, media interviews and a tallyroom.

Media briefings

National and Regional media outlets were invited to a media briefing at the VEC early in October. Seventeen journalists attended and were briefed on legislative changes, details of the tallyroom and the results service. They were also given a first look at the electronically assisted voting service.

Two further media briefings were held to discuss the logistics of the tallyroom and ensure that each broadcaster was given a fair allocation of space according to their broadcasting requirements.

Media handbook

A media handbook was sent to every media outlet in Victoria with additional copies printed and sent out on demand. The handbook was slimmed down to a handy 40 pages from 601 pages in 2006 and concentrated on the most frequently asked questions and details of VEC initiatives. The media were encouraged to visit the VEC website for all other information.

A dedicated media centre was created for the website with profiles of every electorate in Victoria, historical information, maps and relevant staff contact details. The website had 3001 page views during the election period from September to December.

Media releases

Thirty-six media releases were issued to targeted contacts of national and regional media outlets to raise awareness of each stage of the election. Four key media releases were translated into 28 of the most widely spoken languages in Victoria and sent to 93 ethnic media outlets to promote key messages to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Interviews

During the election period VEC staff made themselves available for interview, achieving significant coverage across Victoria and interstate. Highlights included the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner providing radio interviews to 94 national and regional stations at well timed stages of the campaign.

On election night, the Electoral Commissioner was interviewed by Josephine Cafagna on ABC television and the Deputy Electoral Commissioner spoke with ABC Radio twice to update listeners on the progress of the count.

The tallyroom

The tallyroom at the Victory Room, in Etihad Stadium, provided a focal point for media on election night. ABC News (television and radio) broadcast live continuously throughout the evening with Sky News, Channel 7, Channel 9 and Channel 10 broadcasting live crosses. 3AW and MTR also had broadcasting presence all evening. The media outlets were responsible for their own set-up and operating costs.

In a first for a Victorian election, the VEC was honoured by Aunty Joy Murphy (a Wurundjeri Elder) opening the tallyroom with a traditional welcome to country. The welcome was broadcast live on ABC radio.

The electronic tally board was updated in real time and provided an impressive backdrop for the television crews. Peter Ryan, leader of the National Party, chose this position to give a press conference at the end of the evening. Two smaller tally boards were arranged in front of the radio stations and the print/online journalist seating area.

Following the low public attendance at the last election, a reduced seating area was provided. Around 100 people braved the weather to watch the election coverage and extra seating was also provided in the stadium where the tally board was projected onto the large screens.

Tally Room

The VEC’s tally room venue (the Victory Room at Etihad Stadium) had physical constraints on the size and shape of the actual tallyboard, as well as the viewing of the results data.

The VEC developed an electronic tallyboard application that projected results data in a dynamic manner and enabled the use of the multiple audio visual outlets to display the results, including the main scoreboard at Etihad Stadium. In addition, the VEC implemented the same software on an interactive Microsoft Surface table that allowed users to pick and choose the results to be displayed.

Virtual Tallyroom

The VEC created a website dedicated to the publication of results — the Virtual Tallyroom (VTR). The site also provided the media access to up to date results information, which were used for the broadcasts from the actual tally room. The VTR was designed to provide quick and secure access to results as they were received by the VEC on election night and during the following week.

On election night, the website and results files were updated at no more than five minute intervals, receiving more than 1.5 million hits from nearly 78,000 visits to the website.