Victorian Electoral Commission

Report on the Polwarth District
By-election held on 31 October 2015

May 2016
The Honourable Bruce Atkinson, MLC,
President of the Legislative Council

The Honourable Telmo Languiller, MP,
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

I am pleased to submit to you, for presentation to Parliament, this report on the conduct of
the Polwarth District by-election held on 31 October 2015.

The report is presented in accordance with section 8(2)(b) of the Electoral Act 2002.

Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner

May 2016
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Executive summary

A by-election for the State District of Polwarth was triggered by the resignation, on 3 September 2015, of the sitting member, the Honourable Terry Mulder, MP.

A communication campaign that included householder letters on enrolment and voting, and a range of newspaper advertisements helped ensure that electors were aware of details of the by-election, their voting options and the result.

Eight candidates nominated for the by-election. One independent candidate nominated and the Australian Christians, Australian Country Party, Australian Greens, Australian Sex Party, Democratic Labour Party, Liberal Party and The Nationals each endorsed a candidate. The Australian Labor Party did not nominate a candidate for this by-election. As no candidate achieved an absolute majority, a preference distribution was required. Mr Richard Riordan, the candidate for the Liberal Party, who polled 49.65% of the first-preference votes, was elected at the second exclusion.

The turnout rate of 86.18% was lower than the turnout rate of 94.88% for Polwarth in the 2014 State election. However, the turnout rate for this by-election was higher than the average turnout of 79.80% for the five preceding State by-elections.

In line with observed trends, the proportion of voters who voted prior to election day in person or by post, was 34.11%, an increase from 26.65% for Polwarth at the 2014 State election. This phenomenon has been observed around Australia and will be the subject of consideration by the VEC.

The informality rate of 5.16% for Polwarth, with eight candidates, was an increase on the informality rate of 3.89% for Polwarth District with four candidates at the 2014 State election. Yet the informality rate was lower than the average informality rate of 9.06% for the five preceding State by-elections.

An analysis of the informal votes has been conducted and a report is included in Appendix D.

The result of the by-election was declared on Thursday 5 November 2015, and the writ was returned to the Speaker, the Hon. Telmo Languiller MP, on 9 November 2015. I take this opportunity to thank all VEC staff, contractors and suppliers, and particularly the Election Manager, Ms Elizabeth Reeves, Assistant Election Managers, Mr John Keller and Mr Jon McLeod and Election Support Officer, Ms Therese Camm, for their contributions to the very successful conduct of the Polwarth District by-election.

Warwick Gately AM
Electoral Commissioner
1. Snapshot

POLWARTH

First preference votes (% of first preference votes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>1st pref votes</th>
<th>% of 1st pref votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MILES, Joe</td>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>5715</td>
<td>15.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAVANAGH, Carmel</td>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>2911</td>
<td>8.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS, Melinda</td>
<td>Country Party</td>
<td>2043</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’BRIEN, David</td>
<td>The Nationals</td>
<td>4292</td>
<td>11.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECKEL, Brendan</td>
<td></td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOIG, Meredith A</td>
<td>Sex Party</td>
<td>2140</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIORDAN, Richard</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>17798</td>
<td>49.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROGERSON, Geoff</td>
<td>Australian Christians</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results after distribution of preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes after distribution</th>
<th>% votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MILES, Joe</td>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>5855</td>
<td>16.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAVANAGH, Carmel</td>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>3126</td>
<td>8.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS, Melinda</td>
<td>Country Party</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’BRIEN, David</td>
<td>The Nationals</td>
<td>4414</td>
<td>12.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOIG, Meredith A</td>
<td>Sex Party</td>
<td>2251</td>
<td>6.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIORDAN, Richard</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>18015</td>
<td>50.26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnote: Riordan majority gained after exclusion of Eckel and Rogerson.
Participation

Participation at Polwarth District by-election 2015

Total enrolment 43,856
Total votes 37,797
Votes before election day 12,892
Formal votes 35,847
Informal votes 1,950
Voter turnout 86.18%

Voter turnout at Victorian State by-elections 2011–15 (% enrolment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total Enrolment</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
<th>Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polwarth District</td>
<td>31 Oct 2015</td>
<td>43,856</td>
<td>37,797</td>
<td>86.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gippsland South District</td>
<td>14 Mar 2015</td>
<td>40,649</td>
<td>35,390</td>
<td>87.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyndhurst District</td>
<td>27 Apr 2013</td>
<td>36,808</td>
<td>31,215</td>
<td>84.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne District</td>
<td>21 Jul 2012</td>
<td>44,889</td>
<td>30,803</td>
<td>68.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niddrie District</td>
<td>24 Mar 2012</td>
<td>43,441</td>
<td>34,782</td>
<td>80.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadmeadows District</td>
<td>19 Feb 2011</td>
<td>47,605</td>
<td>38,121</td>
<td>80.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Informal votes at Victorian State by-elections 2011–15 (% votes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
<th>Informal Votes</th>
<th>Informal %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadmeadows District</td>
<td>19 Feb 2011</td>
<td>26,771</td>
<td>2,810</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niddrie District</td>
<td>24 March 2012</td>
<td>27,631</td>
<td>3,584</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne District</td>
<td>21 July 2012</td>
<td>27,925</td>
<td>2,878</td>
<td>9.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyndhurst District</td>
<td>27 Apr 2013</td>
<td>31,494</td>
<td>3,288</td>
<td>9.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gippsland South District</td>
<td>14 March 2015</td>
<td>33,439</td>
<td>1,951</td>
<td>5.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polwarth District</td>
<td>31 Oct 2015</td>
<td>35,847</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>5.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average:** 8.95%

### Votes cast prior to Election Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postal votes returned</td>
<td>5,019</td>
<td>13.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early votes</td>
<td>7,873</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes cast before election day</td>
<td>12,892</td>
<td>34.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Background

The writ

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly issued a writ for the by-election for Polwarth District on 17 September 2015. The writ set out the timetable for the by-election.

Election timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue of the writ</td>
<td>Thursday 17 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominations opened</td>
<td>9.00 am, Friday 18 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close of Roll</td>
<td>8.00 pm, Thursday 24 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close of Nominations (party candidates)</td>
<td>12 noon, Thursday 1 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close of Nominations (independent candidates)</td>
<td>12 noon, Friday 2 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting commenced</td>
<td>4 pm, Friday 2 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration of how-to-vote-cards opens</td>
<td>Monday 5 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration of how-to-vote-cards closed</td>
<td>12 noon, Friday 23 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last chance to apply for a postal vote</td>
<td>6.00 pm, Thursday 29 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting closed</td>
<td>6.00 pm, Friday 30 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTION DAY VOTING</td>
<td>8.00 am - 6.00 pm, Saturday 31 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>From 6.00 pm, Saturday 31 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day for return of writ</td>
<td>Friday 20 November</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preliminary arrangements with other agencies

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

The VEC made preliminary arrangements with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to ensure that any matters relating to how-to-vote cards could be heard within a 24 hour period. The VEC thanks VCAT for its support.

Victorian Government Solicitor’s Office

The VEC made preliminary arrangements with the Victorian Government Solicitor’s Office (VGSO) to have a senior legal advisor on standby 24 hours a day during the election period, to ensure that any matters were dealt with in a timely fashion. The VEC thanks the VGSO for its support.

Victoria Police

The VEC contacted the Chief Commissioner of Police to request a discreet police presence at all voting centres during the hours of voting on election day. The VEC provided a full list of all voting venues to Victoria Police to assist with this request. The VEC formally records its appreciation for the support received from the Chief Commissioner and Victoria Police.

Supreme Court

The VEC made preliminary arrangements with the Supreme Court to ensure that a Practice Court and presiding judge would be available to hear any applications for injunctions if the need arose on election day. The VEC thanks the Supreme Court for its support.
The former member

The Honourable Terry Mulder, MP represented the District of Polwarth from 1999 to 2015. Mr Mulder was the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads from 2010 to 2014 after serving as the Shadow Minister for the same portfolios from 2006 to 2010. Mr Mulder served on several parliamentary committees between 1999 and 2009, and from April-September 2015.

Profile of the District

The District includes the centre of the Western District, one of the most fertile dairying and pastoral areas in Victoria. Industries include the manufacture of cheese, butter and other dairy products, timber and sawmilling, vegetable growing, cattle and sheep farming, and tourism. Polwarth District has a number of natural features, such as the Otway Ranges, Lake Colac, Lake Corangamite, and well-known seaside resorts such as Apollo Bay, Lorne and Port Campbell.

Map of the District

![Map of Polwarth District](image)

**Historical pattern of the District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889-94</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-99</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1902</td>
<td>Conservative Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-07</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>Fusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-09</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-17</td>
<td>Fusion Liberal/Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-40</td>
<td>National/UAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-49</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-present</td>
<td>LCP/Liberal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Past Results for Polwarth District

2014 State election results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elected member</th>
<th>MULDER, Terry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total enrolment</td>
<td>43,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal votes:</td>
<td>39,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal votes:</td>
<td>1,599 (3.89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total votes:</td>
<td>41,063 (94.88%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formal votes: 39,464
Informal votes: 1,599 (3.89%)
Total votes: 41,063 (94.88%)

Candidate | First preference votes | %
--- | --- | ---
MULDER, Terry | 21,861 | 55.39%
NORTHEAST, Simon | 4,352 | 11.03%
EDGE, Philip | 2,206 | 5.59%
COKER, Libby | 11,045 | 27.99%

2010 State election results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elected member</th>
<th>MULDER, Terry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrolment</td>
<td>42,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal votes:</td>
<td>38,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal votes:</td>
<td>1,539 (3.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total votes:</td>
<td>39,948 (94.94%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Candidate | First preference votes | %
--- | --- | ---
MODRA, John | 1,211 | 3.15%
KERR, Garry | 1,502 | 3.91%
MULDER, Terry | 21,245 | 55.31%
CROOK, Brian | 10,432 | 27.16%
ATHERDEN, Natalie | 3,235 | 8.42%
BEALE, Grant | 784 | 2.04%

3. Participation

The VEC uses three measures to determine participation in the electoral system:
- enrolment: the proportion of the eligible voting population that enrols to vote
- turnout: the degree to which those who are enrolled actually vote in elections
- informality of voting: the degree to which those who vote cast an informal vote

Enrolment

At the close of roll, there were 43,856 electors enrolled, 579 more than at the close of roll for the 2014 State election.

See Section 5 of this report for information about enrolment.

Turnout

The turnout for the Polwarth District by-election was 86.18%. This participation rate is considered satisfactory, particularly since the Australian Labor Party did not endorse a candidate for the by-election. The turnout rate for the by-election was higher than the average turnout of 79.80% for the five preceding State by-elections.

Informal voting

The informality rate of 5.16% was an increase on the informality rate of 3.89% for Polwarth District at the 2014 State election.

The informality rate for Polwarth District is lower than the average informality rate of 9.06% for the five preceding State by-elections.

An analysis of informal voting at the Polwarth District by-election is included in Appendix D.
4. Election Personnel

Election Manager

Ms Elizabeth Reeves was appointed the Election Manager for the District. The Election Manager was responsible for:

- staffing the election office
- receiving candidate nominations
- conducting the draw for ballot paper positions
- dealing with electoral enquiries
- appointing voting centre managers and election officials
- training voting centre managers
- receiving how-to-vote cards for registration by the VEC
- supervising voting, and receiving and recording results
- declaring the election.

The Election Manager was assisted by VEC staff and other election officials.

Support for Election Manager

Mr John Keller and Mr Jon McLeod were appointed as Assistant Election Managers and Ms Therese Camm was appointed Election Support Officer.

The VEC supported the Election Manager through the provision of:

- advice on election management
- office equipment and furniture, computers, telephones, ballot boxes, voting screens and voting centre furniture
- help desk support and assistance for the VEC’s election management system and with other technical issues
- electoral materials, including voting centre and office forms and manuals
- a voter information campaign for the by-election
- assistance with public and media relations
- netbooks for use in early and mobile voting centres.

Recruitment and training

A total of 194 staff, including an Election Manager, two Assistant Election Managers and an Election Support Officer were appointed for the by-election.

Of these, 137 were appointed as election officials at voting centres on Election Day. Five election officials were appointed as election liaison officers responsible for ensuring processes and procedures were being followed at election day voting centres.

The Election manager appointed 48 election casuals to assist with early voting at the early voting centres, mobile voting, and administrative duties including counts conducted at the election office.

A three-hour training session was conducted for the voting centre managers, assistant voting centre managers, early voting centre managers and election liaison officers. Mobile early voting centre team leaders received training prior to commencing work.

The Election Manager and Assistant Election Managers had previous recent election experience and did not require additional training.
5. Services to Electors

Enrolment

The day after the issue of the writ for Polwarth District, the VEC sent written notification of the by-election to every household in the electorate. The letter advised that, since a by-election would be held soon, eligible people who were not on the electoral roll should enrol, and those who had recently moved should update their enrolment details. This provided four working days for electors to ensure that they were correctly enrolled and eligible to vote in the by-election.

Enrolment advertisements were placed in both major daily papers (see Appendix C for the advertising schedule and sample communication products).

Electors were able to update their enrolment or enrol on the VEC website (vec.vic.gov.au). Printed enrolment forms were also available from the VEC website, Australia Post offices, Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) divisional offices and by contacting the VEC election office.

The VEC head office and District election office remained open until 8.00 pm on Thursday, 24 September. The VEC also made arrangements with the Corangamite AEC divisional office at Colac to remain open until 8.00 pm on Thursday, 24 September.

A total of 411 enrolment transactions occurred between the issue of the writ and the close of roll.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Online Enrolment</th>
<th>Direct Enrolments</th>
<th>AEC Txns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New to Roll</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of Address</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the close of roll, there were 43,856 electors enrolled, 579 more than at the close of roll for the 2014 State election. Of these electors, 747 were general postal voters (GPVs). GPVs automatically receive postal ballot material at the time of an election.

Services for electors from non-English speaking backgrounds

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census, English was stated as the only language spoken at home by 93.7% of people usually resident in Polwarth District.

Electors who were not fluent in English were able to telephone the VEC for information in other languages. Additionally, electors could access voting instructions translated into 21 languages (including English) placed inside each voting screen.

Accessibility of voting centres

All voting centre premises are rated for wheelchair accessibility using a rating assessment tool developed by the VEC, and ratings are included in advertisements, EasyVote letters and on the VEC website.

A by-election was held for South-West Coast District concurrently with the Polwarth by-election. Electors voting early could do so at any early voting centre in either District. One EVC was established in Polwarth District and two in South-West Coast District. Early voting was also available at the VEC’s office at 530 Collins Street, Melbourne.

The early voting centre located in Polwarth District was rated No Wheelchair Access (NWA), mainly due to the distance between the disabled car park and the entrance to the early voting centre.

The early voting centres within South-West Coast District and at the VEC office were all assessed as Assisted Wheelchair Access (AWA) mainly due to issues with accessible parking or building access.

Of the 41 election day voting centres, one was rated as Fully Wheelchair Accessible (FWA), 22 were rated as Assisted Wheelchair Access (AWA) and the remaining 18 were rated as having No Wheelchair Accessibility (NWA). To assist voters, a brief description of accessibility limitations was included on the VEC’s website for venues rated AWA or NWA.
Voting before Election Day

Early voting

Electors unable to vote on Election Day had the opportunity to vote early at early voting centres established within Polwarth and South-West Coast Districts. Additionally, electors in Melbourne during the early voting period could vote at the VEC’s office.

Early voting centres were located at:
- Colac - 310-312 Murray Street
- Portland – Shop 2, 103-111 Percy Street
- Warrnambool – 171A Liebig Street
- VEC Melbourne – Level 11, 530 Collins Street.

Early voting centres were open between 8.30 am and 6.00 pm, Monday to Friday from Monday 5 October to Friday 30 October 2015. Extended opening hours were available on Saturday 24 October and Thursday 29 October.

A total of 7,873 Polwarth District electors (20.83% of total voters) voted early in person for the by-election, compared with 8,036 (19.57% of total voters) for the District at the 2014 State election.

Mobile voting

A total of 589 electors took advantage of mobile voting, with mobile voting teams visiting 19 venues in the weeks prior to election day.

Voting interstate and overseas

Early voting services were provided at eight interstate locations and one overseas location (London).

A total of 37 early votes were cast outside Victoria for the Polwarth District by-election. This compares with 90 for the District at the 2014 State election.

Postal voting

Electors unable to attend a voting centre on election day could apply for a postal vote. Postal vote applications were available for download at vec.vic.gov.au, and could be obtained at any election office or post office in Polwarth or South-West Coast District, or by calling the VEC. Postal voting was also available at interstate early voting centres and in London.

To help ensure the efficient delivery of ballot packs, postal vote applications were processed on the day they were received by the VEC. As postal vote applications may be received up until 6.00 pm on the Thursday prior to the election, the VEC contacted anyone whose application was received on that day to advise them that their vote had to be postmarked on or before election day to be included in the count, and to inform them of other available voting options.

A total of 747 ballot packs were mailed to General Postal Voters and 5,228 postal vote applications were processed for Polwarth. Eleven postal votes were issued outside the State for the by-election. This compares with six at the 2014 State election.

A total of 5,019 postal votes were counted for the by-election (13.28% of total votes).

Voting on Election Day

As the by-election for South-West Coast District was held on the same timelines as the Polwarth District by-election, electors could vote at any of the 75 voting centres open across the two districts on election day. Polwarth electors voting in South-West Coast District had to cast an absent vote. There were 303 absent votes cast for Polwarth at the by-election.

Provisional votes

People who were not on the roll, but who claimed to be entitled to enrol and vote, were able to cast a provisional vote. These people are required to show a proof of identification such as a driver licence or learner permit, or to nominate a service provider to be contacted for identity verification. Votes cast in this manner are classified as ‘provisional’ votes until the person’s enrolment details can be verified.

A total of 201 provisional votes (57.75% of the 348 provisional votes received) were admitted to the count. Most of the excluded provisional votes were rejected because the voters were enrolled in districts other than Polwarth.
6. Services to registered political parties and candidates

Eight candidates nominated for the Polwarth District by-election compared with four candidates in the 2014 State election.

Candidate nomination forms were available by calling the election office or VEC directly. They were also available for download from the VEC’s website. The VEC provided independent candidates with the facility to complete a nomination form online prior to printing and submitting it to the election manager.

Parties nominated their candidates directly with the VEC and the independent candidate nominated through the election office.

The VEC provided a handbook explaining aspects of electoral law directly relating to candidates. Candidates also received a VEC Candidates’ Kit containing:

- a how-to-vote card declaration
- an ‘Appointment of Scrutineer’ form
- an Electoral Roll Confidentiality Agreement
- a list of voting centres in the District (and early voting centres)
- estimated votes and the number of issuing points at each voting centre
- Election Manager contact details
- a nomination form
- a District fact sheet.

After nominating and upon request, candidates were provided with a copy of the electoral roll for the District, via the VEC’s new secure data exchange, for the purposes of campaigning – in compliance with section 33(6) of the Electoral Act 2002.

By-election briefings for parties and candidates

Registered political parties were invited to attend individual briefing sessions before the close of nominations. Three parties participated.

Prospective independent candidates were invited to attend a briefing session conducted on 23 September 2015 at the election office. No prospective independent candidates attended.

Registration of how-to-vote cards

How-to-vote cards that are distributed within 400 metres of a voting centre on election day must be registered with the VEC. Political parties were required to register how-to-vote cards directly with the VEC. Independent candidates could submit their cards with the Election Manager for registration by the VEC however the independent candidate at the by-election did not register any how-to-vote cards.

A how-to-vote card checklist was provided in each candidate’s handbook, to ensure that all cards were correct, authorised and properly registered.

A total of 9 how-to-vote cards were registered for the Polwarth District by-election (see Figure 1). As required by legislation, registered how-to-vote cards were published on the VEC website.

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FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS REGISTERED, POLWARTH DISTRICT BY-ELECTION 2015
7. Communication services

The Polwarth District by-election communication campaign consisted of direct mail, newspaper advertising, a telephone enquiry service, proactive media relations, Facebook and Twitter posts, and information and services provided via the VEC website.

Direct mail

The VEC distributed 28,984 enrolment information letters to households in Polwarth District from 18 September 2015.

An EasyVote letter was also sent to each elector on the roll (excluding General Postal Voters). The EasyVote letter provided information about early voting, postal voting, overseas and interstate voting and election day voting arrangements. It also provided the location and accessibility rating of all voting centres, and a suggestion that the elector take the letter to the voting centre to help streamline the voting experience.

A total of 43,109 EasyVote letters were lodged with Australia Post on 1 October 2015 for distribution.

Newspaper advertising

A series of advertisements that met the requirements set out in the Electoral Act 2002 appeared in local newspapers, as well as in The Age and Herald Sun throughout the election period (see Appendix C for placement details and advertisement samples).

Telephone enquiry service

The election office operated a dedicated telephone enquiry service from 17 September. Calls to the office peaked each time a mailout occurred, with electors calling to:

- check enrolment details
- ask for advice about what to do if they could not attend a voting centre on election day and
- enquire about the location of election day voting centres.

Email information

Electors could also email the VEC with requests and queries via its info@vec.vic.gov.au email address.

The main types of queries received during the election period related to:

- early voting centre locations
- overseas voting, and
- employment.

The VEC received a relatively low number of emails (19) through its info@vec.vic.gov.au email address.

Website

From the day the writ was issued, the VEC website provided information about the by-election for electors in the District, candidates and the general public. Traffic to the website peaked on election day, with over 7,200 page views of the primary by-election information page. There were over 1,100 sessions on the registered how-to-vote cards and then over 6,000 sessions looking at results on election night and the following two days.

Electors were able to update their enrolment details online via the VEC’s website. Online information detailed voting obligations and options for electors if they could not vote on election day. During the by-election period, around 1,500 postal vote applications were downloaded directly from the site, and a total of 1,400 sessions involved the download of the list of voting centre locations (including interstate and overseas).

During the entire period, the most frequently accessed content was – in order of user sessions: results; how-to-vote cards; the election timeline; and voting centre locations. Candidate information and nomination forms were also available on the website. Results were made available progressively on the VEC website after 6.00 pm on election night.
Social media

Facebook and Twitter were used by the VEC to help disseminate key election information and updates throughout the election.

When compared to the 2014 State election, social media activity was very quiet throughout the by-election.

The VEC posted a number of standard Tweets during the campaign. Public posts regarding the by-election were the main activity seen on Twitter for the Polwarth by-election.

There were 110 posts to Twitter using the generally accepted tag #PolwarthVotes and visits to the VEC’s Facebook page were only marginally higher than when no election is being conducted.

Media relations

The VEC distributed five media releases to local and State-wide media outlets throughout the election period. The releases provided key electoral information, including the deadline for enrolment, the opening of candidate nominations, the final candidate list, the opening of the early voting period and voting options for Polwarth District electors. A media advisory was also issued, offering interested media outlets the opportunity to record footage on election day.

The VEC handled 53 media enquiries relating to the concurrent Polwarth and South-West Coast by-elections from several local and seven State-wide media outlets. The majority of queries concerned the timing of the by-elections and the four-week early voting period, early voting figures, registration of interest to film on election day, and availability of results. In addition, the VEC sought correction of an error regarding the potential date of the by-elections published in the Warrnambool Standard.

On election night, media results data files were made available for download from the VEC website.

8. Complaints

The VEC received two formal complaints about the Polwarth District by-election. One complaint related to difficulties contacting the Polwarth Election Office and a second to the conduct of staff at the Polwarth Election Office. All complaints were managed in accordance with the VEC process and where relevant, appropriate response/action was taken.

9. Counting the votes

After the 6.00 pm close of voting, the first-preference count took place in the voting centres and the results were phoned through to the election office.

A two-candidate-preferred (2CP) count, to distribute preferences to the two candidates considered most likely to be in the lead after the distribution of preferences, was conducted following each count of first-preference votes. The VEC had selected the Liberals and The Nationals for the 2CP count. It became apparent on election night that the leading two candidates in terms of first preference votes were the Liberal and Greens candidates. As it was not clear whether The Nationals or the Greens would be second-placed once preferences were distributed, the VEC did not adjust the original 2CP figures, but extended the preference distribution to achieve the 2CP split between the Greens and the Liberal Party.

Postal and early votes were counted in the election office on election night in the same count order as in the voting centres. Provisional votes were checked on the Monday after election day and those entitled to be admitted were counted.

A recheck was conducted on all ballot papers on the Monday following the election. A preference distribution was conducted to determine the result of the election. Mr Riordan gained a majority after only two candidates had been excluded. The VEC continued with the preference distribution for information purposes down to the final two candidates.

10. Declaration of result, return of the writ

Mr Richard Riordan (Liberal) was declared the successful candidate on Thursday 5 November 2015.

The writ was returned to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on 9 November 2015.
11. Actual cost

At 18 March 2016 the actual direct costs incurred by the VEC in conducting the Polwarth District by-election was $371,820. This includes direct expenses and obligations related to salaries of temporary election personnel, advertising and associated infrastructure including office accommodation, transport and office requisites. These costs exclude the election entitlement payments shown in Figure 2.

12. Refund of nomination deposits

Upon nominating for an election, candidates (or their party) must provide a deposit of $350. This deposit is refunded if the candidate obtains at least 4% of the first preference vote or is elected. Deposits were refunded on 7 December 2015.

Of the eight candidates, six were refunded their deposit, and two candidates forfeited their deposit with the funds being forwarded to consolidated revenue.

13. Electoral entitlements

An amount of $1.668 per vote was payable to political parties and independent candidates for this election where candidates obtained at least 4% of the first-preference votes.

An entitlement existed for six of the seven party candidates. There were no entitlements payable for the independent candidate. All the entitlements with the exception of the Australian Sex Party were paid by 15 March 2016.
14. Enforcement of compulsory voting

Postal vote declarations received too late for the count, and elector information reports completed at voting centres on election day — detailing elector excuses for not voting — were processed through the compulsory voting module of the VEC’s Election Management System during December 2015.

The first stage of the non-voter follow-up process is conducted under Part 9, Division 2 of the *Electoral Act 2002*. Subsequent follow-up of electors who do not respond to the 'Apparent Failure to Vote' notice, or who provide an invalid response, is conducted under the *Infringements Act 2006*.

Electors who are deemed to be non-voters may receive two further notices from the VEC.

- An Infringement Notice providing notification of liability for a penalty amount (currently set at $76).
- A penalty reminder notice that includes costs as well as the original penalty.

Payment of penalties may be by cheque, money order, cash, via the internet using BPAY, or at any Australia Post outlet using the PostBillPay facility. Penalties collected are progressively reconciled and transferred to consolidated revenue.

The first stage of compulsory voting follow-up for the Polwarth by-election commenced on 15 January 2016, with 4,348 Apparent Failure to Vote notices mailed.

On 2 March 2016, 2,839 Infringement notices were mailed to apparent non-voters who either did not respond to the Apparent Failure to Vote notice, or provided an invalid excuse.

It is anticipated that enforcement of compulsory voting provisions will be completed by early July 2016.

Further details regarding the enforcement of compulsory voting provisions at the by-election will be included in the VEC’s Annual Report.
15. Appendices
## Appendix A: Detailed voting statistics

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<td>17</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winchelsea South</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiridjil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MILES, Joe</td>
<td>KAVANAGH, Carmel</td>
<td>CASS, Melinda</td>
<td>O'BRIEN, David</td>
<td>ECKEL, Brendan</td>
<td>DOIG, Meredith</td>
<td>RIORDAN, Richard</td>
<td>ROGERS, Geoff</td>
<td>Informal Votes</td>
<td>Total Votes Polled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Ordinary Votes</td>
<td>3927</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>1397</td>
<td>2907</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>1537</td>
<td>10797</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>1462</td>
<td>24401</td>
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<td>Absent</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Vote</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>4070</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>7873</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postal Vote</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>2707</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>5019</td>
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<td>Provisional</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>201</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Declaration Votes</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>1108</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>7001</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>13396</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL ALL VOTE TYPES</td>
<td>5715</td>
<td>2911</td>
<td>2043</td>
<td>4292</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2140</td>
<td>17798</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>37797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Formal Vote Polled By Candidate</td>
<td>15.94%</td>
<td>8.12%</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
<td>11.97%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
<td>49.65%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
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</table>
Appendix B:
Distribution of preference votes

Total valid first preference votes polled for all candidates: 35,847
Number of votes required to constitute an absolute majority on first count: 17,924
Number of informal votes: 1,950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates’ Names (in ballot paper order)</th>
<th>MILES, Joe</th>
<th>KAVANAGH, Carmel</th>
<th>CASS, Melinda</th>
<th>O’BRIEN, David</th>
<th>ECKEL, Brendan</th>
<th>DOIG, Meredith Anne</th>
<th>RIORDAN, Richard</th>
<th>ROGERS, Geoff</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total first preference votes recorded for each candidate</td>
<td>5715</td>
<td>2911</td>
<td>2043</td>
<td>4292</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2140</td>
<td>17798</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>35847</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer of 373 ballot papers of ECKEL, Brendan (1st excluded candidate)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>373</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive Total</td>
<td>5807</td>
<td>2968</td>
<td>2108</td>
<td>4336</td>
<td>2206</td>
<td>17830</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>35847</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer of 592 ballot papers of ROGERS, Geoff (2nd excluded candidate)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Total</td>
<td>5855</td>
<td>3126</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td>4414</td>
<td>2251</td>
<td>18015</td>
<td></td>
<td>35847</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuation of distribution for information purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer of 2186 ballot papers of CASS, Melinda</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive Total</td>
<td>6123</td>
<td>3928</td>
<td>4887</td>
<td>2561</td>
<td>18348</td>
<td>35847</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer of 2561 ballot papers of DOIG, Meredith Anne</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>2561</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Total</td>
<td>7086</td>
<td>4515</td>
<td>5412</td>
<td>18834</td>
<td>35847</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer of 4515 ballot papers of KAVANAGH, Carmel</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>1748</td>
<td>1022</td>
<td>4515</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive Total</td>
<td>8831</td>
<td>7160</td>
<td>19856</td>
<td>35847</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of 7160 ballot papers of O’BRIEN, David</td>
<td>2145</td>
<td>5015</td>
<td>7160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL TOTAL</td>
<td>10976</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24871</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RIORDAN, Richard (Liberal) elected at 2nd exclusion
# Appendix C: Communication products

## ADVERTISEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Outlets</th>
<th>Publication date(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue of the writ</strong></td>
<td>The Age (combined), Herald Sun (combined)</td>
<td>18 September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early voting</strong></td>
<td>Geelong Advertiser, Surf Coast Times, Colac Herald, Geelong Independent, Winchelsea Star, Cobden Times, Camperdown Chronicle, Terang Express, Mortlake Dispatch, Warrnambool Standard (combined)</td>
<td>5–9 October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to vote on election day</strong></td>
<td>Surf Coast Times, Colac Herald, Geelong Independent Winchelsea Star, Cobden Times, Camperdown Chronicle, Terang Express, Mortlake Dispatch, Cobden Times</td>
<td>27–30 October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vote today</strong></td>
<td>The Age (combined), Herald Sun (combined), Geelong Advertiser, Warrnambool Standard</td>
<td>31 October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result and return of the writ</strong></td>
<td>The Age (public notices), Herald Sun (public notices)</td>
<td>11 November 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘Combined’ refers to advertisements that reference both Polwarth District and South-West Coast District by-elections.
ISSUE OF THE WRIT ADVERTISING

Polwarth District & South-West Coast District
State by-elections

Voting
Make sure you’re enrolled to vote
You are already enrolled for either the
Polwarth District by-election or South-West
Coast District by-election if you’re on the State
or Federal roll for your present address within
the area shown on the maps below.
If you’re an Australian citizen, aged 18 years or
over and are not enrolled, you must enrol to
vote immediately.
If you have recently moved or changed your
name, you must update your enrolment by
8.00 pm on Thursday 24 September.

How do I check if I’m on the roll?
You can check your enrolment details to see if
they are current at vec.vic.gov.au or by calling
1300 805 478.

Enrolling or updating your details online
To enrol or update your details online, just visit
vec.vic.gov.au—there is no need for paper
forms.
If you are enrolling for the first time, you
will need a driver licence number,
Australian passport number or a person
who is already on the electoral roll in
Victoria to confirm your identity.
For more information please visit
vec.vic.gov.au or call 1300 805 478.

Enrolling or updating using a paper form
Paper enrolment forms are available at
any post office, Centrelink or Australian
Electoral Commission office. Alternatively,
visit vec.vic.gov.au to download a printable
form.

Enrolling is compulsory
Enrolling and keeping your enrolment details
up-to-date are compulsory.
However, if you have never enrolled or
have let your details lapse, you will not be
penalised if you enrol for this by-election.

When do I vote?
Election day is Saturday 31 October.
Details of where to vote and other
voting options will be available
shortly and mailed to enrolled
electors within Polwarth District
and South-West Coast District,
listed online at vec.vic.gov.au and
advertised in local newspapers.

Candidates
Nominations
Registered political parties must nominate
candidates at the Victorian Electoral
Commission (VEC), Level 11, 530 Collins Street,
Melbourne. Nominations close at 12 noon on
Thursday 1 October. Late nominations cannot
be accepted.

Candidates not endorsed by a registered
political party must nominate at the election
office with the Election Manager, who will
supply a Candidate Information Kit including a
nomination form.
Non-party candidates can use the Candidate
Helper at vec.vic.gov.au to pre-complete their
nomination form.
Non-party candidate nominations close at
12 noon on Friday 2 October. Late
nominations cannot be accepted.

An information session for prospective
non-party candidates will be held at the
election office. Call the Election Manager for
more information on nominating.

Polwarth District
Election Office: 310-12 Murray St, Colac
Election Manager: Elizabeth Reeves
Contact: (03) 5231 1134

South-West Coast District
Election Office: 171A Liebig St, Warrnambool
Election Manager: Ian Sadler
Contact: (03) 5561 3327

How-to-vote cards
If a person or organisation intends to distribute
how-to-vote cards on election day, Saturday
31 October, the cards must be registered by
the VEC.
Registered how-to-vote cards are the only
form of printed electoral material that may
be distributed within 400 metres of a voting
centre on election day.
The period for submitting how-to-vote cards
for registration is from Monday 5 October to
12 noon on Friday 23 October.
Organisations or individuals other than
registered political parties can submit
how-to-vote cards to the Election Manager for
each District or to the VEC.
Registered political parties must submit their
how-to-vote cards for registration to the VEC
at Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne.
How-to-vote cards submitted for
registration after 12 noon on Friday
23 October cannot be accepted.
EARLY VOTING ADVERTISING

**Early voting**

**Polwarth District by-election**

**Can’t get to a voting centre on Saturday 31 October? Check your early voting options.**

**Vote in person**

Vote between 8.30 am and 6.00 pm weekdays until Friday 30 October at:
- 510-12 Murray Street, Colac NWA
- Shop 2/105-111 Percy Street, Portland AWA
- 171A Liebig Street, Waroona AWA
- VEC, Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne AWA

NWA - No wheelchair access
AWA - Assisted wheelchair access

Extended early voting hours apply:
- 9.00 am–2.00 pm Saturday 24 October
- 8.30 am–8.00 pm Thursday 29 October

To vote early, you will have to declare that you are unable to attend a voting centre on election day during voting hours.

**Vote by post**

Get a postal vote application at vec.vic.gov.au or any post office within Polwarth District, or call 131 832.

Complete and return your application immediately to have a ballot pack sent to you.

**Going away?**

**Before you leave**

Vote early in person or by post.

**While you’re away**

Vote by post. Or visit an interstate or overseas early voting centre until Friday 30 October.
Check vec.vic.gov.au for locations.

**Who can vote in this by-election?**

Anyone on the State electoral roll for Polwarth District can vote.
Visit vec.vic.gov.au to check your enrollment.

Are you an Australian citizen, aged 18 or over and living in Polwarth District, who has never enrolled? You can enrol and vote on the spot. Just bring one of these documents when you visit a voting centre:
- a driver licence or learner permit
- a council rates notice in your name
- an electricity bill in your name for your current home address
- a current Victorian identification, such as a Proof of Age card.

**131 832 vec.vic.gov.au**

Victorian Electoral Commission VEC

Authorised by: W Caddy, AM, Director Commission, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria
Voting this weekend
Polwarth District by-election

Who can vote?
Everyone on the State electoral roll for Polwarth District can cast a vote at any voting centre on election day.* If you are an Australian citizen, aged 18 or over and living in Polwarth District, who has never enrolled, you can enrol and vote on the spot. Just bring one of these documents when you visit a voting centre:
- a driver licence or learner permit
- a council rates notice in your name
- an electricity bill in your name for your current home address
- a current Victorian identification, such as a Proof of Age card.

How to vote correctly
For your vote to count, you must complete your ballot paper correctly.

Put the number 1 in the box next to the candidate you most want to see elected, then number 2 ALL the other boxes in order of your preference.

You must number every box for your vote to count. Use numbers only.

Candidates
The candidates, in ballot paper order, are:

MILES, Joe
AUSTRALIAN GREENS

KAVANAGH, Carmel
DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY (DLP)

CASS, Melinda
AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

O’BRIEN, David
THE NATIONALS

ECKEL, Brendan

DOUG, Meredith Anne
AUSTRALIAN LIBERAL PARTY

ROGIN, Richard

ROGERS, Geoff
AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIANS

Voting is compulsory
Voting is compulsory if you were on the electoral roll for Polwarth District at the close of the roll, 8.00 pm on Thursday 24 September 2015. Visit vec.vic.gov.au to check your enrolment. You may be fined if you do not vote.

For more information visit vec.vic.gov.au or call (03) 5231 1134

* Please note: You can also vote for the Polwarth District by-election at any voting centre in the adjoining South-West Coast District, which is having a by-election on the same day. See vec.vic.gov.au for locations. Please prepare for longer waiting times if you vote outside your enrolment district.
Vote today
Polwarth District by-election

Who can vote?
Everyone on the State electoral roll for Polwarth District can cast a vote at any voting centre today.*

- You must be an Australian citizen, aged 18 or over and living in Polwarth District, and have been enrolled in the State electoral roll, or have enrolled on the spot, just bring one of these documents when you visit a voting centre:
  - a driver licence or learner permit
  - a council rates notice in your name
  - an electricity bill in your name for your current home address
  - a current Victorian identification, such as a Proof of Age card.

How to vote correctly
For your vote to count, you must complete your ballot paper correctly.

- Put the number 1 in the box next to the candidate you most want to see elected, then number ALL the other boxes in order of your preference.
- You must number every box for your vote to count. Use numbers only.

Candidates
The candidates, in ballot paper order, are:

MILES, Joe
AUSTRALIAN GREENS

KAVALAIGH, Carmel
DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY (DLP)

CASS, Melinda
AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY PARTY

O’BREIN, David
LIBERAL

ECKEL, Brendan

DOIG, Meredith Anne
AUSTRALIAN SEX PARTY - VICTORIA

RIORDAN, Richard
LIBERAL

ROGERS, Geoff
AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIANS

Voting is compulsory
Voting is compulsory if you were on the electoral roll for Polwarth District at the close of the roll, 8:00 pm, on Thursday 24 September 2015.

Visit vec.vic.gov.au online to check your enrolment.

You may be fined if you do not vote.

For more information visit vec.vic.gov.au or call (03) 5231 1134
RESULT AND RETURN OF THE WRIT NOTICE

Polwarth District and South-West Coast District

State by-elections

Declaration of results

The candidate elected in the Polwarth District by-election held on Saturday 31 October 2015 was:

Richard Riordan
Liberal

The candidate elected in the South-West Coast District by-election held on Saturday 31 October 2015 was:

Roma Britnell
Liberal

I have returned writs to the Hon. Telmo Languiler, MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The writs were issued on Thursday 17 September 2015 for the election of one member to the Legislative Assembly for Polwarth District and one member to the Legislative Assembly for South-West Coast District.

Detailed results are available at vec.vic.gov.au

Warwick Gately, AM
Victorian Electoral Commission
### MEDIA RELEASES AND ADVISORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Headline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Issue of writ</td>
<td>Timeline for State by-elections set for October</td>
<td>17 September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominations</td>
<td>Call for candidates for Polwarth and South-West Coast by-elections</td>
<td>18 September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close of roll (District enrolment figures)</td>
<td>Almost 90,000 to head for polls in Polwarth and South-West Coast</td>
<td>25 September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close of nominations and start of early voting period</td>
<td>Candidates announced for Polwarth and South-West Coast by-elections</td>
<td>2 October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early and election day voting period</td>
<td>Voting options for Polwarth and South-West Coast electors</td>
<td>26 October 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Election day media opportunities</td>
<td>Polwarth and South-West Coast by-elections: Media photo/film opportunities and results</td>
<td>28 October 2015</td>
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### DIRECT MAIL

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<tr>
<th>Product</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment letter to households</td>
<td>Key election dates and how to check and update your enrolment</td>
<td>28,984</td>
<td>18 September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EasyVote letter</td>
<td>Voting options, voting locations, contact information and an EasyVote Card</td>
<td>43,109</td>
<td>1 October 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important information:  
**Polwarth District by-election**

To the householder

**Are you correctly enrolled?**

A by-election for your District is being held on Saturday, 31 October 2015. By law, if you are an Australian citizen over the age of 18, you must be enrolled at your current address once you have lived there for one month.

If you’ve moved since you last enrolled, or have changed your name or post office box, you must ensure your enrolment details are up to date by 8.00 pm on Thursday, 24 September.

If you are an Australian citizen, aged 18 or over and you are not enrolled, you need to enrol immediately.

**How do you check if you are on the roll?**

Check online at enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au or call 1300 805 478.

**Enrolling or updating your enrolment online**

To enrol or update your details online, just visit enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au and complete an electronic enrolment update; there is no need for paper forms.

If you are enrolling for the first time, you will need a driver licence number, Australian passport number or a person who is already on the electoral roll in Victoria to confirm your identity.

**Enrolling or updating your enrolment with a paper form**

Paper enrolment forms are available at any post office, Centrelink or Australian Electoral Commission office. Alternatively, visit vec.vic.gov.au to download a printable form.

Completed enrolment forms should be mailed immediately to the Victorian Electoral Commission, Reply Paid 66506, Melbourne, Victoria, 8001 (no stamp is required). You can also fax it to (03) 9277 7126, email a scanned copy to elector@vec.vic.gov.au or deliver the form in person to one of the offices listed below:

- Australian Electoral Commission, 55 Dennis Street, Colac
- Victorian Electoral Commission, Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne

You must ensure that you’re enrolled and that your details are correct by 8.00 pm on Thursday, 24 September.

**Do you have to enrol?**

Enrolling and keeping your enrolment details up-to-date are compulsory. However, if you have never enrolled or have let your details lapse, you will not be penalised if you enrol for this by-election.

**Voting in the by-election**

The VEC will write to all enrolled voters before election day providing information about the various voting options that will be available. If you are registered as a General Postal Voter, your ballot material will be mailed to you from Monday, 5 October.

Warwick Gately, AM  
Electoral Commissioner

**Check your enrolment online at enrolment.vec.vic.gov.au or call 1300 805 478**

Authorised by W. Gately, AM, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street,

Melbourne, Victoria.
EASYVOTE LETTER

Your EasyVote Letter:

**Polwarth District by-election**

The Polwarth District by-election will be held on **Saturday 31 October 2015**

Voting is between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm

**VOTING IS COMPELLARY - AVOID A FINE**

**Where can I vote?**

You can vote at any voting centre within Polwarth District between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm on Saturday 31 October.

A complete list of voting centres is available on the back of this letter.

There is also a by-election on the same day in the adjoining South-West Coast District. You can vote in the Polwarth District by-election at any voting centre located in South-West Coast District. See vec.vic.gov.au for voting centres within South-West Coast District.

**Can I vote early?**

If you can’t get to a voting centre on election day, you can vote at any early voting centre listed below:

- 310-312 Murray Street, Colac **NWA**
- 171A Liebig Street, Warwambool **AWA**
- Shop 2/103-111 Percy Street, Portland **AWA**
- VEC Head Office, Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne **AWA**

*AWA* – Assisted wheelchairs access
*NWA* – No assisted wheelchairs access

Early voting centres are open between 8.30 am and 6.00 pm on weekdays until Friday 30 October, with extended hours on Saturday 24 October (9.00 am to 2.00 pm) and Thursday 29 October (8.30 am to 8.00 pm).

To vote early, you will have to declare that you are unable to attend a voting centre on election day during voting hours.

Early voting is also available at Victoria House, London, UK, and at various interstate locations. See vec.vic.gov.au for hours of operation.

**Can I vote by post?**

Postal vote applications are available:

- online at vec.vic.gov.au
- at any post office within Polwarth District
- at the election office: 310-312 Murray Street, Colac
- at the Australian Electoral Commission office:
  55 Dennis Street, Colac
- at the VEC Head Office: Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne
  - by calling 131 832

The VEC must receive your postal vote application by 6.00 pm on Thursday 29 October.

**Is voting compulsory?**

Yes. Voting is compulsory if you were on the State or Federal roll for Polwarth District at 8.00 pm on Thursday 24 September.

You may be fined if you do not vote.

**For more information, visit vec.vic.gov.au or call (03) 5231 1134.**

Authorised by W. Gatosy, AM, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.
Election day is Saturday 31 October.
Voting is between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm.

Election day voting centres
1. Anglesea Memorial Hall
   McMillan Street
   Anglesea AWA
2. Apollo Bay Youth Club
   19/21 Moore Street
   Apollo Bay AWA
3. Barwon Heads Cultural Centre
   27 High Street
   Barwon Heads AWA
4. Beac Primary School
   35 Lang Street
   Beac, AWA
5. Birregurra Community Health Centre
   28-30 St. John Street
   Birregurra AWA
6. Carpendale Public Hall
   corner Anmers and Carpendale-Bangadon roads
   Carpendale AWA
7. Colleen Scout Hall
   1 Peter Street
   Colleen AWA
8. Colac Primary School
   65 Murray Street East
   Colac AWA
9. Colac West Primary School
   2-24 Edgar Street
   Colac AWA
10. Corio Public Hall
    580 Corioangiter Lake Road
    Corio AWA
11. Creswick Hall
    Yelta Road
    Creswick AWA
12. Dean Marsh Public Hall
    Pennyroyal Valley Road
    Dean Marsh AWA
13. Dimboola Community Hall
    Main Street
    Dimboola AWA
14. Eddin Hall
    143 Timboon-Teang Road
    Eddin South AWA
15. Elliminyt Primary Events & Education Centre (EPEE)
    Main Street
    Elliminyt AWA
16. Forrest Primary School
    19/12 Grant Street
    Forrest AWA
17. Golblin Hall
    Cola-Lawes Hill Road
    Golblin AWA
18. Inverleigh Primary School
    Hamilton Highway
    Inverleigh AWA
19. Irrewirre Public Hall
    2480 Timboon-Colac Road
    Irrewirre AWA
20. Lavers Hill Public Hall
    47 Great Ocean Road
    Lavers Hill AWA
21. Lismore Primary School
    77 Great Ocean Road
    Lismore AWA
22. Lone Senior Citizens Centre
    Mountjoy Parade
    Lone AWA
23. Mortlake Soldiers Memorial Hall
    Shaw Street
    Mortlake AWA
24. Noorat Primary School
    McKinnons Bridge Road
    Noorat AWA
25. Nullawarre Public Hall
    2184 Timboon-Nullawarre Road
    Nullawarre AWA
26. Peterborough Golf Club
    20 Schonberg Road
    Peterborough AWA
27. Port Campbell Recreation Reserve
    Denali St
    Port Campbell AWA
28. Rokwood Primary School
    38 Albury Street
    Rokwood AWA
29. Scotts Creek Public Hall
    Colleen-Port Campbell Road
    Scotts Creek AWA
30. Simpson Primary School
    Early Child Centre
    Rambouillet Street
    Simpson AWA
31. Skipton Mechanics Institute
    S Anderson Street
    Skipton AWA
32. St. Alberts Church
    27-29 Great Ocean Road
    Alkyns Inlet AWA
33. St. Paul's Anglican Parish Church
    Church Street
    Skipton AWA
34. Stonehaven CFA Fire Station
    corner Dog Run and
    Eyre Street-Corinna Road
    Eyre Street-Corinna Road
    Eyre Street-Corinna Road
    Eyre Street-Corinna Road
35. Teesdale Primary School
    Sutherland Street
    Teesdale AWA
36. Terang Civic Hall
    131 High Street
    Terang AWA
37. Timboon P-12 College
    Hamilton Street
    Timboon AWA
38. Warren Public Hall
    Corong-Corong Road
    Warren AWA
39. Winchelsea Senior Citizens Centre
    36 Harding Street
    Winchelsea AWA
40. Wondi Hall
    Princes Town Road
    Corio-Geelong Road
    Wondi AWA
41. Warrakine Hall
    220 Warrakine Road
    Winchelsea South AWA

Early voting centres in
Polwarth District
EVC: Polwarth State Election Office
310-312 Murray Street
Colac AWA
FWA = Fully wheelchair accessible
AWA = Assisted wheelchair access
NWA = No wheelchair access
Appendix D: Analysis of informal votes

Informal votes at the Polwarth by-election

After each State election and by-election, the VEC analyses the incidence and nature of informal voting at that election. The VEC aims to maximise participation by Victorians in their democracy, and knowledge of the types of mistakes that voters made can assist the VEC to achieve this goal.

In the Polwarth by-election, 1,950 votes were informal (5.16% of total votes). The by-election informal voting rate was significantly greater than at the November 2014 State election, when 3.89% of the votes were informal. The actual number of informal votes increased by 351, despite a decline in the total number of votes. On the other hand, informal voting at the Polwarth by-election was the lowest at a by-election since the 2010 Altona by-election (4.96%). Informal voting tends to be lower in country than in metropolitan electorates, which may be related to the more homogeneous and less mobile nature of society in country areas.

The number and range of candidates can affect the informal voting rate. The number of candidates for Polwarth increased from four at the State election to eight at the by-election. Although there were more candidates in the by-election than at the State election, the ALP did not stand a candidate. In by-elections over the past decade where both major parties were standing, the informal vote was a median of 1.33 percentage points lower than at the preceding State election. In contrast, where a major party was not standing, the informal vote was 2.39 percentage points higher than at the State election. It appears that some party supporters prefer to vote informally than to vote for another party or candidate.

Informal voting rates ranged from 0.8% (1 vote) at Lavers Hill to 10% at Rokewood. Informal voting rates tended to be higher than average in the inland towns of Colac, Camperdown, Terang, Cobden, Winchelsea and Bannockburn. Very few postal votes were informal (2.3%), while the early informal voting rate (4.5%) was close to the district average.

In the survey of informal ballot papers, the VEC used the same categories as in its analyses of informal ballot papers since the 2006 State election. These categories are described in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>The bulk of these ballot papers were presumably deliberately informal, though they might include ballot papers lodged by people who had difficulties with the whole voting process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – 1 only</td>
<td>Ballot papers including insufficient numbers to constitute a formal vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – insufficient</td>
<td>Ballot papers including number sequences such all ‘1’s, or ‘0’, or ‘1’, ‘10’, ‘300’, which indicate an intention to cast an informal vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – apparently deliberate</td>
<td>Ballot papers with ticks or crosses in every square, indicating an intention to reject all the candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing – other</td>
<td>Vague scrawls not indicating any intention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing – apparently deliberate</td>
<td>Ballot papers with writing or drawings indicating opposition to all the candidates, including those with a cross over the whole paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1: CATEGORIES USED BY THE VEC IN ANALYSIS OF BALLOT PAPERS
Table 2 shows the results of the survey for the by-election and for Polwarth at the 2014 State election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2015 by-election</th>
<th>2014 State election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>767 (39.3%)</td>
<td>455 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – 1 only</td>
<td>134 (6.9%)</td>
<td>457 (29.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – insufficient</td>
<td>181 (9.3%)</td>
<td>69 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – deliberate</td>
<td>98 (5%)</td>
<td>82 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers – other</td>
<td>310 (15.9%)</td>
<td>64 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticks/crosses – preference</td>
<td>60 (3.1%)</td>
<td>134 (8.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticks/crosses – deliberate</td>
<td>100 (5.1%)</td>
<td>64 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticks/crosses – other</td>
<td>6 (0.3%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing – deliberate</td>
<td>236 (12.1%)</td>
<td>243 (15.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing – other</td>
<td>58 (3%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,950</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,568</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Results of survey of informal ballot papers cast for Polwarth at 2015 by-election and at 2014 State election - detailed categories

Blank ballot papers were by far the largest category of informal votes, with 767 votes, or 39.3% of the total. This was a significant increase from the 455 blank ballot papers (29%) cast by Polwarth voters at the 2014 State election.

'Numbers –'. Voters in the ‘other’ category were informal mainly through numbering mistakes – skipping or duplicating numbers. The large number of candidates for the Polwarth by-election appears to have contributed to the rise in this category. The proportion of informal votes of this type rose from 4.2% at the State election to 15.9% at the by-election, making this the second largest category.

'Writing – deliberate' was the third largest category, comprising 12.1% of informal votes. The proportion in this category declined slightly from the State election.

As at other by-elections, the proportion of informal ballot papers with a single 1 (6.9%) was much lower than at the State election (29.1%). Without the confusion of the Upper House ballot paper (on which most voters do vote ‘1’ above the line), very few by-election voters made this mistake.

Table 3 shows the results of the survey in broader categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2015 by-election</th>
<th>2014 State election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>767 (39.3%)</td>
<td>455 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>723 (37.1%)</td>
<td>672 (42.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticks/crosses</td>
<td>166 (8.5%)</td>
<td>198 (12.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>294 (15.1%)</td>
<td>243 (15.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,950</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,568</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Results of survey of informal ballot papers cast for Polwarth at 2015 by-election and at 2014 State election - broad categories
Numbering errors were a large category. Ticks and crosses were a small group in the by-election. In the State election as a whole, 13.01% of informal votes were in this category, with the incidence being higher in districts with larger proportions of recent immigrants, many of whom would have voted using a tick or cross in their former homelands.

Table 4 groups the various categories of deliberately informal votes and shows the result when the blank ballot papers are added to the marked ballot papers that were deliberately informal. It also groups the ballot papers that indicated a clear preference (either through the number “1” or a single tick or cross).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2015 by-election</th>
<th>2014 State election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apparently deliberate</td>
<td>434 (22.37%)</td>
<td>389 (24.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently deliberate including blank</td>
<td>1,201 (61.6%)</td>
<td>844 (53.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating preferences</td>
<td>375 (19.2%)</td>
<td>660 (42.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>1,568</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4: RESULTS OF SURVEY OF INFORMAL BALLOT PAPERS CAST FOR POLWARTH AT 2015 BY-ELECTION AND AT 2014 STATE ELECTION - DELIBERATELY INFORMAL AND PREFERENCE VOTES

The proportion of apparently deliberate informal votes was higher than at the State election, and the number of preference votes was greatly diminished. There appears to be a trend to a substantial protest vote at by-elections, particularly in normally safe seats.