
During the election the VEC’s workforce increases to over 20,000 people. The management of the extraordinary recruitment and selection campaign, the induction and training of appointees and casuals, and the Health and Safety of our workforce requires significant planning, coordination and ongoing evaluation.

Election Managers and Region Coordinators

The VEC has approximately 300 Senior Election Officials (SEO) on standby, who have been recruited and trained for engagement as Election Managers during State and local government elections. From this pool of SEOs, individuals were selected for appointment to management roles for the election.

Appointment and Training of Election Managers

A total of 56 Election Managers were appointed to conduct elections for 88 members of the Legislative Assembly. Each Election Manager was responsible for one or two districts; most Election Managers in metropolitan areas were responsible for two districts, while most Election Managers in rural areas with larger geographic boundaries were allocated one district. See Appendix 8 for a list of Election Managers.

All Election Managers completed extensive training, comprising home study in conjunction with a series of seminars at the VEC (one two-day seminar, one three-day seminar and a one day briefing in late October). Assistant Election Managers from the VEC’s pool of SEOs were appointed to assist each Election Manager. Two Assistant Election Managers were appointed to each office. The Assistant Election Managers also completed the VEC’s training program.

The Election Manager’s role is to establish offices and appoint staff to facilitate the smooth running of the election for their electorates. They issue early votes, process independent candidates’ nominations, organise the draw for the order of the candidates’ names on the ballot papers, appoint and train voting centre staff, and make arrangements for establishing voting centres for Election Day. On Election Day, the Election Manager is responsible for the conduct of the election and the counting of votes for those electorates for which they have responsibility.

Appointment and Training of Region Coordinators

Region Coordinators are responsible for rechecking all region ballot papers for their appointed region. The Region Coordinator was responsible for receiving region ballot papers from Election Managers, supervising the checking and reconciliation of those ballot papers and despatching those marked ‘below-the-line’ to the central computer counting venue. An Assistant Region Coordinator was appointed to assist each Region Coordinator.

All Region Coordinators and Assistant Region Coordinators completed two days of face-to-face training plus home study.

Support for Election Managers and Region Coordinators

Election Support Officers

Election Support Officers (ESOs) provided support to the VEC’s Election Managers and Region Coordinators throughout the election. Located at the VEC’s Melbourne office, the ESOs were the central point of contact between the Election Managers / Region Coordinators, the Electoral Commissioner and other VEC staff. They assisted Election Managers and Region Coordinators with procedural and other complex issues.

Helpdesk

Six Helpdesk operators provided support to Election Managers and Region Coordinators. Principally, they assisted the Election Managers and Region Coordinators with the operation of the VEC’s Election Management System, the new personnel system (which was used for the first time this election) and other technical matters.

Recruitment

Election Managers and Region Coordinators were responsible for recruiting administrative staff to work in their offices, at early voting centres and at voting centres on Election Day.
In addition, Election Managers were able to appoint Election Liaison Officers (ELO) who visited voting centres on Election Day. The ELO’s role was to alert the Election Manager to instances where voting centres may have needed extra resources and deliver them where appropriate, and to ensure procedures were applied consistently.

To assist with the appointment of staff, the VEC implemented a new personnel system which involved self-registration by people interested in working on the election. For the first time casual staff were responsible for entering and maintaining their own details within the system. Election Managers used the personnel system to search for staff with appropriate community languages for their area, and to ensure that they could offer opportunities to people who may otherwise be underrepresented in general employment, such as people from ATSIC backgrounds or those identifying as having a disability.

Online Recruitment

The VEC provided an online application for prospective employees to register for employment as either election officials or as casual workers. The VEC received more than 28,000 expressions of interest and the application enabled the VEC to efficiently manage a central pool of prospective appointees, reducing the considerable administrative effort required to employ such a large number of staff.

Training

The majority of election officials were required to complete online training. There were three streams of online training, depending on the specific appointment: one for Voting Centre Managers (VCMs), Assistant Voting Centre Managers (AVCMs) and ELOs, one for Declaration Issuing Officers, and one for other election officials. In addition, Election Managers conducted a three-hour face-to-face training session for their VCMs, AVCMs and ELOs and a one-hour training session for Declaration Issuing Officers. The VEC developed a standard training package, which included a PowerPoint presentation and practical activities to assist Election Managers with their training. This ensured that training sessions were conducted in a professional and consistent manner across the State.

All election officials were provided with a manual, which covered voting centre procedures in detail and a new DVD produced for this election which provided an overview (with an emphasis on the context of their role) good customer service and accountability.

Online Training

An online training application was utilised to train around 16,500 election officials employed at voting centres on Election Day. The software and hosting was provided by a third party company and content was developed by the VEC to suit training requirements. The online training program was completed by approximately 93% of election officials compared with around 81% in 2010.

Staff Evaluation

VCMs and ELOs evaluated the work performance of all election officials, in order to determine their suitability for future employment. These details have provided the VEC with a strong database repository for future elections.

Measures to Ensure Impartiality

A justified community perception of political neutrality is critical to ensuring a high level of public trust and confidence in the independence and impartiality of the VEC.

Accordingly, prospective election staff are asked to disclose their political memberships and activities prior to appointment. The Electoral Act 2002 allows the VEC to discriminate against a person in relation to offering appointment on the basis of political membership or activity. This discrimination is lawful under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

The VEC’s personnel system allows for potential staff to fill out an online Disclosure of Political Activities questionnaire at the time they are offered an appointment. Anyone who was ineligible for appointment after assessment of their questionnaire was notified within 24 hours. An appeals process was utilised for anyone who challenged the decision made regarding their perceived impartiality. Of all the disclosures made, 197 prospective appointees were initially disqualified. Requests for review were subsequently received from 35 provisionally disqualified applicants, of which eight decisions were overturned and offers of appointment subsequently made. A total of 189 prospective appointees were disqualified from being appointed as an election official or election casual.
Payroll

The VEC implemented a new payroll system for the 2014 State election. The new system was specifically configured to manage large volumes of casual appointments over a very short period of time. A total of 16,494 election official positions were filled to support voting on Election Day and a further 3,164 casuals were appointed to support early voting, counting and other election office functions.

Prospective election staff were able to register interest in working at the election online, and offers of appointment could be despatched and responded to electronically. The system also allowed election staff to manage their own personal and banking details online by providing access to the VEC system via a private self-service portal.

Election Managers were able to administer the appointment of election officials more efficiently and over a much shorter time period compared to previous elections. A designated Helpline was established to support election staff in using the new system. The Helpline operated from Friday 18 July, with staff numbers continually adjusted to support demand. The major periods of activity occurred when registration commenced in July and after Election Managers began despatching offers of appointment during October and November. Pleasingly, 95% percent of election staff were paid within two weeks of Election Day.

A number of election staff did not complete all the required personal and banking details, which resulted in a delay to their payment. The VEC will look at further strategies to address this issue at future elections.

Occupational Health and Safety

All Election Managers attended a training session in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) covering areas such as the Victorian OH&S legislative requirements, hazard identification, incident reporting and workplace assessments.

The VEC created an Election OH&S risk register identifying ‘fatigue’ and ‘manual handling’ as the two highest risks for the election period (10 October to 16 December 2014). As a result, controls were put in place to reduce the risk level. These controls included a manual handling Safe Work Procedure (SWP), which was provided to election staff, ‘heavy lift’ labels for packages, a fatigue self-assessment form and fatigue checklist.

There were 82 incidents reported over the election period, 41 involved election appointees/casuals, 37 involved members of the public and four incidents involved VEC employees. There were 61 incidents that resulted in an injury. Of note, 50% of all incidents were slips, trips and falls.