

Election Process Review

Under the *Local Government Act 1989* (Act), each council is responsible for aspects of election preparation and operation, in particular the collation and maintenance by the CEO of the voters' list of ratepayers.

In the lead-up to the 2012 Victorian local government general elections, the Inspectorate selected eight councils to review their election processes, with a focus on the validity and accuracy of the voters' list. This Information Bulletin aims to provide advice gleaned from that review to assist councils prepare for future local government elections.

Good governance practices, particularly those related to the democratic process, are essential in ensuring communities continue to have confidence in their local council.

What we found

Overall, the Inspectorate found **high levels of compliance** with the requirements of the Act. Councils were proactive in their communications with businesses and residents to raise awareness of the upcoming elections and errors on voters' lists were generally detected and rectified in a timely manner.

Councils rely on the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) for advice and timely reminders and the relationships between the VEC and councils was found to be very positive.

The Inspectorate did note varying levels of election experience and knowledge across the councils which lead to some gaps in the awareness of requirements and processes. The value of **documented processes**, particularly for events such as elections that occur infrequently, can't be overstated as this documentation is essential for consistency and knowledge sharing.

The Inspectorate found examples of councils developing their own coding system for the status of each voter, which is inconsistent with the **standardised voter status codes** required by the VEC, for example non-resident owners and corporate occupiers. This inconsistency made **verifying the accuracy of the rolls** more challenging.

In reference to section 23A of the Act, the Inspectorate also found examples where councils had not **contacted previously registered applicant voters**, such as non-citizen ratepayers and businesses, to advise them of their entitlement to vote and the need to renew their application for inclusion on the voters' list of ratepayers.

The Inspectorate also found that councils who conducted **ongoing testing of their rates database** experienced fewer issues than those only doing so when compiling the voters' list of ratepayers.

What should you consider?

Local government elections occur every four years so now is a good time to document election requirements and your council processes for future reference, ensuring good business continuity.

Further information

The Inspectorate is available to assist councils to ensure all requirements under the Act are being fulfilled.

[Local Government Victoria](http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au) can also provide process advice to councils.

For any further advice or information, please contact the Inspectorate on (03) 9665 9555 or visit: www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/inspectorate.