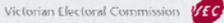# REACHING OUT

VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The VEC conducts Victorian State and council elections, commercial and community polls

- Electoral Register (Roll)
- Electoral research
- Increase awareness of electoral matters (communication and education)
- Representation Reviews for State and council boundaries

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Inclusion and Participation

Electoral Access Advisory Group established 2006

Early focus on electronic voting (State elections only), accessibility of voting venues, wheelchair height voting booths, fat pencils, magnifying sheets

In more recent times resourcing has enabled a greater focus on initiatives to assist voters with intellectual impairments, communication issues

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Inclusion and Participation

2016-2019 Disability Action Plan

Goal: Improve access to enrolment and voting for Victorians living with a disability.

Strategies

1. Improve physical access to enrolment and voting
2. **Develop partnerships with people and peak bodies to facilitate improved access to enrolment and voting**
3. **Improve the accessibility and clarity of information on enrolment and voting**
4. **Provide for more Victorians to have a secret, independent vote**
5. Improve staff awareness and assistance to people living with a disability
6. Improve the VEC's capacity to employ and appropriately task people living with a disability

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Voters Voice – Digital Engagement

In 2014 piloted six Accessibility Supercentres at State election

- Electronically assisted voting
- Auslan interpreters
- Communication boards
- CCTV (magnifies materials)
- Hearing loops
- Multilingual staff
- Fully wheelchair accessible
- Wheelchair height voting booths

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Voters Voice – Digital Engagement

Develop and implement a capacity building module as part of the VEC's Education Program for community guardians

Partner with Scope and technology Provide to explore the feasibility of an app for use on BYO technology to replace the need for talking boards and Auslan interpreters
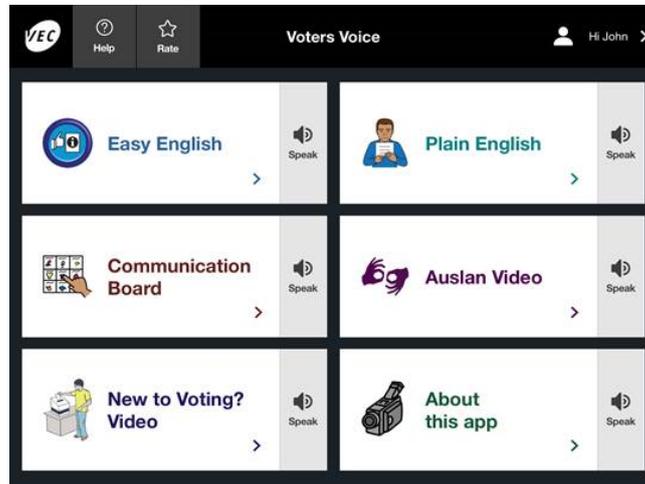
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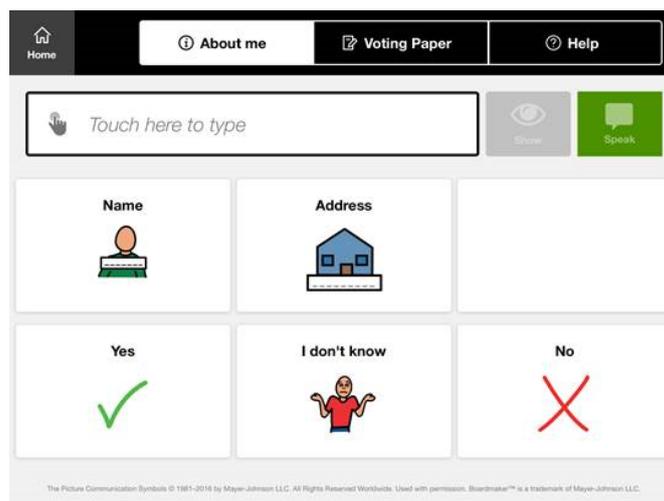
Voters Voice – Digital Engagement

Develop prototype for testing with:

- People with complex communication difficulties

- Support workers

- Disability agencies – those initially contacted

- Voting centre staff member

- Exec management

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Voters Voice – Digital Engagement

Voters Voice – Digital Engagement

Voters Voice – Digital Engagement

- Literate people who cannot speak

- People with limited/no literacy/little English literacy

- People who speak Auslan

Free App is at: **bit.ly/votersvoice**   As at 26 October **– 1,564 downloads**
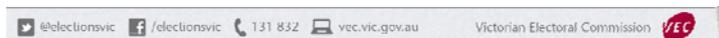
Limits:
- **Presumes an understanding of the concept of voting and merely facilitates the process for those with complex communication difficulties.**
- **Relies on carer, support worker to assist with downloading in many cases**
- **Getting the word out - promotion**

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Voting is for Everyone Program

- Carers' electoral education program:
  - face-to-face workshops
  - online eLearning
- Partnership with Carers Victoria
- Objective:

  to increase carers' level of knowledge of electoral process, including that *voting is a right and responsibility of every citizen*

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Voting is for Everyone

- The VEC developed content in consultation with carers and disability organisations
- 33 sessions delivered by Carers Victoria
- 400 carers participated

Fatima's story

Fatima was born with no arms at birth and has just celebrated her 18th birthday. Fatima's friends are all enrolling to vote and Fatima would like to enrol too. She asks her mother if she can enrol along with her friends. Fatima's mother tells her that she is not eligible to enrol as she cannot fill in the electoral form herself. She states that it is illegal for someone else to fill in the form on her behalf, therefore she can't vote.

○ Fatima can enrol using the enrolment form for those unable to sign. Once enrolled Fatima can vote.

○ Fatima's mother is correct, if she can't fill in the ballot herself she cannot vote.

Submit   Show feedback

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Voting is for Everyone Program

Challenges:
- interest in and need for the information
- outcome expectations
- balancing 'supported-decision' making and information about electoral process

A couple of people in the group said the talk has encouraged them to speak to their care recipients and encourage them to vote. Both were caring for someone with a mild intellectual disability.

Education Deliverer, Carers Victoria

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