



PILCH

Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

## Voting at the State Election

On Saturday, 25 November 2006, there will be a Victorian State Election. This is your opportunity to have a say about who represents you in the State Parliament. The State Parliament is responsible for policies and programs in areas including homelessness, housing, health care, transport, education and training, drugs and crime prevention, human rights and anti-discrimination.

### Why is it important to enrol and to vote?

1. Voting is empowering.
2. If you don't vote, you let other people decide what is best for you.
3. Your vote could determine the election result. Many seats are won by a handful of votes.
4. Voting is one of the simplest and most effective ways of having your voice heard.
5. Politicians and political parties collect statistics and track information about whether members of various community groups are enrolled to vote and exercise their right to vote. In 2001, it is estimated that up to 80 000 homeless people were not enrolled or did not vote. Politicians and political parties are more likely to act in the interests of homeless people if they know that homeless people have the power to vote.
6. Voting is a legal obligation.

**The more homeless people that enrol and vote, the more power and influence that homeless people and advocates will have.**

### Who is eligible to vote?

- You have the right to vote if:
  1. you are 18 years of age or more; and
  2. you are an Australian citizen; and
  3. you are enrolled to vote.
- You do not need to have a home, a fixed residential address or even a postal address to enrol and vote.

### How do you enrol to vote?

- You can enrol to vote by completing and submitting a No Fixed Address enrolment form.
- You can enrol to vote at any time, but if you want to vote at the next State Election you must complete and submit your form by 8:00pm on Tuesday, 7 November (Cup Day).
- If you think you may already be enrolled but you're not sure, enrol to vote anyway because your application form will be used to update your enrolment details.
- You can use enrolment application forms attached to this information sheet, or get them from any post office, by visiting [www.13vote.com.au](http://www.13vote.com.au) or by calling toll free 1800 013 366.
- If you require assistance with filling out the enrolment forms, contact a Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic Lawyer (9225 6684), the Council to Homeless Persons – Homelessness Advocacy Service (freecall 1800 066 256) or a support worker at any homelessness assistance service.

### Enrolment options for homeless people

- **If you do not have a fixed residential address (for example, you are homeless and sleeping rough, staying in crisis accommodation, couch surfing with friends or relatives, or staying in boarding houses or rooming houses for short periods of time) you may be eligible to enrol as an Elector with No Fixed Address.**

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- Amendments to the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) since the last State Election provide that the No Fixed Address Elector category specifically includes homeless persons, as defined in the legislation. A Homeless person is defined as:

A person living in:

- (i) crisis accommodation; or
- (ii) transitional accommodation; or
- (iii) any other SAAP accommodation; or
- (iv) a person who has inadequate access to safe and secure housing.

If you live in any of these forms of accommodation, you are eligible to enrol as a No Fixed Address Elector. A No Fixed Address Elector Enrolment Application Form is attached to this information sheet.

- If you have a fixed residential address and you have stayed at that address for at least the last month, you can enrol as an Ordinary Elector. An Ordinary Elector Enrolment Application Form is attached to this information sheet.
- If you enrol to vote as an Ordinary Elector, your name and any address details will be included on a publicly available electoral roll. If you don't want your address shown on the roll because those details could put you or your family at risk of violence or harm, you can apply to be a Silent Elector. Call toll free 1800 013 366 for a Silent Elector Application form.
- If you enrol to vote as a No Fixed Address Elector, your address will not appear on the electoral roll.

#### How do you vote?

- Call toll free 1800 013 366 or visit [www.13vote.com.au](http://www.13vote.com.au) to find out where your closest voting centre is.
- If you need assistance to vote, you may ask a friend, relative, worker or polling official to help you.
- If you think that you won't be able to get to a voting centre on election day, call toll free 1800 013 366 before election day and the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) can help you to

cast a postal vote (postage paid).

Or you can visit an early voting centre. Early voting centres are open from Monday, 13 November until 6.00pm on Friday, 24 November. Call toll free 1800 013 366 to find your nearest early voting centre.

#### What happens if you don't vote?

- If you are enrolled as a No Fixed Address Elector and you don't vote, you will not be asked to provide a reasonable excuse; you cannot be fined for failing to vote and only risk being removed from the electoral roll. You will, however, miss the opportunity to have your say!
- If you are enrolled as an Ordinary Elector and you don't vote, the VEC will write to your last known address to ask why. If you provide a reasonable excuse, such as illness or disability, you may not be fined. If you can't provide a reasonable excuse you may be fined \$53.40.

#### Some important facts about voting

- The VEC has no power to fine you for failing to enrol and vote in past elections. They can only fine you if you enrol as an Ordinary Elector, but fail to vote in forthcoming elections. It's not important that you haven't voted at past elections, but it is important that you enrol and vote now!
- If you enrol to vote, you are no more or less likely to receive a visit from the police or sheriff about things like old fines or warrants.
- Your vote and the votes of your friends count! If the 20 000 homeless people in Victoria enrol and exercise their right to vote, the government will be forced to do more about homelessness.

