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**ACER HELPS MANAGE  
VICTORIAN ELECTIONS  
DURING A LOCKDOWN**



*Rolling out election office infrastructure during a pandemic lockdown was achieved with the right mix of technology and project management.*

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is the legislated sole provider of election services in the state of Victoria – for both state government and local council elections – and has a long-standing commitment to the local government sector to deliver high quality election services, with innovation, integrity and independence. The VEC also administers the State's electoral roll.



In order to provide a high-quality election service and ensure that every voter experiences a quality and convenient service through which to exercise their democratic rights, the effective use of information technology is essential.

In October 2020, Victorian citizens went to the polls to elect their local government representatives, in what was the largest single election program in Victoria so far – with over 4.2 million enrolled voters and upwards of 2,000 candidates participating in nearly 300 individual elections. To support the election process, the VEC established 76 election offices located across metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria.

The VEC opened a tender process to find a business partner with the capability of supplying the technical services needed to install, configure and test the election office infrastructure and IT equipment to its required standards, as well as to decommission the infrastructure and IT equipment after the election.

Acer responded to the tender process and were selected on the basis of best value for money, and the quality of the solution and response presentation.

## **More than the usual challenges**

As high-profile events conducted within strict legislated timelines, elections have considerable potential for wide-scale exposure in the media if there are any apparent failures in services to electors.

The VEC also stipulated strict timelines for deployment and decommissioning:

- Each Election Office needed to have its installation and de-installation each completed within one working day.
- Installations and de-installations were to mainly occur during business hours unless agreed to by the Election Manager and installer.
- The technical team would need to travel throughout Victoria.
- Installation and de-installation schedules may have changed at short notice.

In addition, the project was to be performed during a COVID-19 lockdown period in Victoria, which meant that not only must the rollout teams conform with the VEC's OHS requirements, but processes also had to be incorporated to ensure technicians were COVID-free and able to move around the state to perform their tasks.

## **A professional solution**

Acer's response was to provide a range of benefits to the VEC to drive a positive deployment experience, deliver efficiency for the VEC Project Team and keep ancillary internal costs low.

Acer provided a trusted and experienced team of technical resources from Victoria, with on-site team leaders and technicians who had been utilised on previous projects, and proven to be effective, professional and able to deliver results while travelling. A project manager was assigned to manage all matters relating to the delivery of deployment and decommission services.

The role of the technical on-site manager was to provide additional technical support to the technicians and the VEC where required. Having this remote resource in place reduced calls to the VEC IT Support as the technical on-site manager is able to solve issues before they were escalated to the IT team.

To deal with the Victorian lockdown, Acer developed a COVID-19 Management Plan that included the daily temperature testing of technicians, as well as checking into management on a daily basis prior to attending each Election Office site.

A deployment pilot was initiated first, in which Acer's technicians and team leaders initially visited the VEC in the planning phase to understand the organisation's processes, gain an understanding of the experience required to set up Election Offices, provide advice on potential improvements or efficiencies, practice procedures, and gain sign-off for the project to commence. This was done to set the criteria for the successful site rollout to follow.

As part of the project, the VEC also purchased miniature form factor 550 Acer Veriton N6660 computers along with with Acer B246HL 24" height adjustable monitors. This hardware was required to support part of the Election Office infrastructure kit to be shipped and supplied to each location.



Acer B246HL

Acer Veriton N6660

## Digital project management

Acer utilises a deployment app that allows its technicians to capture details such as serial numbers, asset tag numbers, photos, building information and a range of customisable data at the time of deployment. This provides a database to record all activities and information pertinent to the project, and was made accessible to the VEC. The Technical Onsite Manager worked closely with the VEC from the commencement of the project to customise Acer's applications and online forms to match the VEC's exact requirements.

Acer's deployment app also has functionality for accepting signatures for work sign-off and to provide electronic certificates of acceptance.

During the project, the VEC was updated with a 'traffic light' report presented daily for each site, with additional holistic project reporting provided on a weekly basis. Site reporting to meet the VEC's Workplace Health & Safety guidelines was also supported by technicians completing a risk assessment at each site, with results accessible through the project database.

### **Project success: on time and within budget**

The project was completed in two phases, with the rollout and set-up phase taking approximately three weeks prior to the election and the post-election decommissioning phase also taking approximately three weeks. The VEC had set an ambitious schedule that needed to be maintained due to other project dependencies, but all sites were completed on the due dates as required, and within the allotted budget



The success of the project was in large part due to the VEC and Acer being able to work together seamlessly, and to provide a positive experience for both parties. Proactive project management made it possible to work through changes as they arose, with the VEC having direct access to the Acer technical team to make adjustments as required.

The VEC reported that Acer's team "did a fantastic job on both the installs and de-installs. (The) team was reliable and the work was done well. It has been great working with (Acer) on this project."