Women with Disabilities Victoria

Recommendations to a Whole-of-Journey approach to improve voting centre accessibility

Submission to the Inquiry into voting centre accessibility

FEBRUARY 2026

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Language Note

This submission uses 'person first' language (women and gender diverse people with disabilities). We acknowledge that people describe their experience of disability in different ways, and for many people, 'identity first' language is a source of pride and resistance. Further, not all Women with Disabilities Victoria's members or staff identifies as a woman with disabilities. That is why we refer to our members as 'women and gender diverse people with disabilities'.

We acknowledge that while some concerns raised are shared across gender-marginalised communities, the experiences of gender diverse people warrant specific and direct exploration. Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) does not seek to speak for or replace the role of organisations led by and for LGBTIQA+ people with disabilities. Instead, we aim to work in coalition with them and amplify areas of shared concern.

Acknowledgment of Country

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work, rest, and continue to benefit from. We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Victoria and acknowledge that their continued strength and resilience are built upon more than 60,000 years of history. The WDV community is committed to honouring the unique cultural and spiritual relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and waters, and their rich contribution to society.

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About the Authors

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) is a not-for-profit Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) representing women with disabilities in Victoria. The organisation is operated *by* and *for* women and gender diverse people with varied disability experiences. WDV has a diverse membership of people from different backgrounds. Women with disabilities face intersecting forms of structural gender and disability discrimination. WDV actively advocates for our rights to safety and respect, with particular emphasis on disability policy, health services, violence prevention, workforce development, and leadership. WDV envisions a world where all women are respected and can fully experience life.

Key Contributors

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WDV's Youth Experts by Experience, Leadership Hub Members and disability advocates were consulted to inform our recommendations.

Executive Summary

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Electoral Matters Committee's inquiry into voting centre accessibility.

Nearly 1 in 5 Victorian women has a disability, representing a significant portion of the population who experience multiple layers of discrimination based on gender, disability, race, age, or sexual orientation.

For over 30 years WDV has tirelessly worked at addressing compounding nature of specific barriers such as ableism, sexism, misogyny, and systemic exclusion that mainstream women's advocacy and disability advocacy organisations may overlook.

As an intersectional organisation, we also address other areas of marginalisation such as socio-economic status, ethnicity and geographic location which impact women and gender diverse people with disability. Our work is grounded in lived experience, with our members and staff bringing their lived experience as women and gender diverse people with disabilities.

Women and gender diverse people with disabilities deserve to be equal citizens. We have the right to be free from violence and to access our community and necessary services. To achieve this, we need to exercise our democratic right to vote, which should be easy and safe to do.

Australia is a signatory to UN Conventions on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). Under Article 29 – Participation in political and public life, States Parties are obligated to provide facilities and materials that are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use.

Victoria's current voting facilities and processes to vote for a person with disabilities does not fulfil obligations within the CRPD. The Committee should invest in prioritising accessibility for all voters with disabilities.

This submission responds to the Electoral Matters Committee's inquiry into voting centre accessibility. We consulted our Youth Experts by Experience Advocates (ages 18-26), Leadership Hub Members and Disability Advocates. WDV's Disability and Gender advocates are all women and gender diverse people with a diverse range of disabilities and experiences who live across Victoria. Throughout this submission, we have used their quotes to highlight the need for change.

We have provided recommendations and experiences of our members related to voting centres and improving access to voting for our community of women and gender diverse people with disabilities.

Recommendation 1:

The Committee should select voting centres using a whole of journey approach that meets the needs of voters with disabilities, whether or not they use a mobility device.

Recommendation 2:

Each electorate must provide a low-sensory zone at every voting centre for voters who need a quieter, low light space.

Recommendation 3:

Develop a voting centre best practice accessibility and inclusion guideline co-designed with people with disabilities.

Recommendation 4:

Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) should provide disability access and inclusion training and Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program training to all permanent staff and casual election staff.

Recommendation 5:

Each electorate must have clearly identifiable Accessibility Officers to assist voters with disability when needed.

Recommendation 6:

Promote the VEC's voting facilitation guide and other resources to engage young people with disabilities and empower them to vote in elections.

Recommendation 7:

Develop a guide to safe voting practices for victim survivors.

Inquiry Questions Addressed

This submission draws on reflection and feedback from our Youth Experts by Experience, regional Leadership Hub members and disability advocates. This submission responds to the following questions:

1. **What criteria should be used when choosing voting centres so that they're accessible to people with disability?**
2. **What help should staff at voting centres offer to people with disability?**
3. **If you have a disability (or help someone who does), have you had good or bad experiences at voting centres in previous Victorian elections? What was done well and what could have been better?**

Additional questions were added to the survey to expand Question 1 to seek responses on what helps or prevents our community from going to a voting centre to cast their vote.

Background

The current political environment in Victoria is challenging and has led to growing cynicism among voters. Trust in our democracy is low[1], where voting is done to avoid a fine. Because of this, the Electoral Matters Committee (the Committee) should focus on making voting as simple and as easy as possible for all voters.

The VEC does provide certain accessibility options for voters with disabilities.[2] Currently, voting centres offer large magnifying sheets, maxi pencils for easier grip, assisted hearing devices at early voting centres and voting centres, wheelchair or desktop voting compartments.

In 2023 Warrandyte District by-election, the VEC also trialled a low-sensory early voting centres for neurodivergent voters. An internal evaluation of the trial found that 100% of surveyed participants said they would choose to vote at low sensory centre again if it were available.[3]

The low sensory early voting centres adjustment included –

- Natural or dimmed lighting at venue
- Reduced background noise
- Extra space provided around each voting screen
- Additional accessible parking spaces
- VEC staff wearing the disability sunflower 'supporter' lanyard.

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[1] Kariotis, Timothy, Gabrielle Grist, and Dr Willhemina Wahlin. 2022. "Using Design to Put Voters at the Heart of Elections." Unimelb.edu.au. The University of Melbourne. May 18, 2022. https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/using-design-to-put-voters-at-the-heart-of-elections.

[2] Victorian Electoral Commission. 2025. Review of *2025 Werribee District By-Election Service Plan*. Victorian Electoral Commission. January 2025. https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/-/media/1de3e08a8af7427a9b18a9e5bbbb6286.pdf.

[3] Victorian Electoral Commission. 2024. "Report to Parliament 2023 Warrandyte District By-Election." Victorian Electoral Commission. https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/496499/globalassets/tabled-paper-documents/tabled-paper-8099/vec-report-to-parliament---2023-warrandyte-district-by-election-march-2024.pdf.

Voting is compulsory in Victoria. Because of this, the Committee must understand and respond to voter's access needs. This will help more people participate fully in each election.

Q 1. What criteria should be used when choosing voting centres so that they're accessible to people with disability?

Accessible voting centre

Ensuring that selection of voting centres to adopt a whole of journey approach and each voting centre should have a separate quiet and low-sensory zone.

WDV Youth Experts by Experience Insight
"I know the Australian Electoral Commission website says that voting centres to be accessible and near public transport, accessible parking and that's how voting centres are chosen but the voting centre closest to me there isn't public transport nearby, and the closest one would require the person to walk quite a bit and on voting day that time would be much longer because of navigating through other things and people and finding carpark is impossible let alone an accessible car park, which I don't even think is available."

Whole of journey approach

In a democratic system, elections rely on voters, including people with disabilities. Voting is a fundamental right. It allows people with disabilities to participate in our society as equal citizens.

The VEC website provides information about accessibility supports such as wheelchair access, large magnifying sheets, Auslan at early voting centres, and maxi pencils. However, this presents a limited view of the accessibility requirements of people with disabilities to vote.

Although the VEC provides wheelchair accessibility ratings for each centre, in our member's experience their closest voting centres were not physically accessible.

WDV Member Insight
"I have found that the physical accessibility suggested online is not always accurate in real life. More descriptions would be really helpful."

Selection of voting centres should consider:

- Accessibility for voters using various mobility aids like, walking cane, walkers, and manual wheelchairs. Voters using these mobility aids often can't walk long distances resulting in fatigue. Therefore, centres where walking long distances from the car park or public transport stops to reach the voting centre queue should be avoided.
- Voters with disabilities may face as geographical barriers when accessing voting centres. The nearest accessible voting centre may not be easily accessible by car or public transport to reach without significant effort or exhaustion. Therefore, all voting centres should be fully accessible to make it easy and simple for all voters.
- Plans for how people with disabilities travel to voting centres as well. The Committee should consider the different transport options voters may use and map accessible routes that are safe and easy to follow.
- Acceptable walking distance i.e. less than 100m, from accessible public transport stops to the centre that is a levelled, step-free with minimal physical barriers like entrance gates.
- Footpaths and bike paths that are usable and well maintained. Safe pedestrian crossings should also be available.
- The centre to have a continuous accessible path of travel from the public transport stop till the voting centre entrance. This must comply with the Disability (Access to Premises) Standards 2010. There should be no steps, stairs, revolving doors or non-automated doors or other physical barriers that prevent access. The pathways should also have good surface contrast to assist people with low vision.

WDV Member Insight

"Clear accessible entrance with signage that indicates where to go when to leave as well as when arriving. Sufficient circulation space particularly through doorways. Walkways that are well-maintained, clear of debris and easy to navigate with a variety of mobility aids. People have different lighting requirements so maybe even the option to have a room with brighter lighting and with lower lighting so people can choose based on their needs"

Voting centre

Voting in person is a powerful expression of equal citizenship. However, it can also be overwhelming and exhausting for people with disabilities to wait in long queues to vote.

Further, lack of appropriate and accessible seating, lack of shelter, in-sufficient wayfinding to get in and out, and no provision of priority line for voters with disabilities who may prefer to use it on the day also adds to the stress of voting in-person.

WDV Youth Experts by Experience Insight
"There's never a priority line, so if you are a person that can't actually wait in line, at these voting centres, you kind of have to build up the courage to self-advocate to go up to the staff member and say, I can't wait in this long line, I've got a disability, I need you to escort me to the front of the line."

Voting centres should consider:

- Provision of a well-managed and safe priority queue with wider lane or a priority access for voters with disabilities.
- Provision of sheltered rest area with appropriate seating for voters who can't stand in long queues including children accompanying parents.
- Access to accessible toilets with baby change facilities and gender-neutral toilets.
- Provision of appropriate toileting facilities for assistance and guide dogs.

Quiet and low-sensory voting zones

People with disabilities are not a homogenous group. They have diverse access need and lived experiences. Their age, disability, cultural and racial background all influence how a person approaches in-person voting.

WDV Youth Experts by Experience Insight
"They're [voting centre] just not Austim-friendly."

In our consultation, members described the need for a separate staffed zone that provides a quiet, low-sensory space with dim or natural lighting. This will support voters who are neurodivergent, blind or vision impaired, attending with a support person or may require more time to understand the process of filling out the ballot papers or who to vote.

WDV Youth Experts by Experience Insight
"It was great that I was able to take the time with her [support worker] to do that. But on flip side it was at a spot where everyone else was around and I felt like everyone knew that I was taking forever and I don't want to talk too loudly or anything. Then whispering in the corner and it was just a bit weird."

The assumption that everyone can complete a ballot paper within a standard time reflects an ableist attitude. Our members shared different experiences. Some prepare well in advance, as strong self-advocates, and aim to complete the process quickly. Others who are not up to date with current political landscape, candidates and their policies and are voting to avoid a fine. Therefore, they may need more time to adjust and to understand the process and fill their ballot papers.

Quiet and low-sensory voting zones should consider:

- Provision of wider booths as well for people who need more space to comfortably fill their ballots.
- Provide a separate quieter space to assist voters who may need more time to fill out their ballot papers. It also allows voters to communicate clearly with their support person and cast their vote with confidence.
- Provision of a separate low-sensory area to also help reduce anxiety and fear. Each electorate should provide a low-sensory zone.
- Low-sensory zones must also be physically accessible, with no steps or other obstructions.
- Provision of alternate entrance to access quiet and low-sensory zones.

WDV Youth Expert by Experience Insight
"I think the inherent problem is that there is no universal standard for voting centres accessibility. What should it look like and what they need to include."

Voting centre accessibility should not be limited to a wheelchair accessibility rating and limited to access aids and tools. Voting centre accessibility should take a **whole-of-journey approach.** This means considering the voter's experience from travelling to the centre, to casting their vote, and returning home. The goal should be to ensure the process is safe, easy and empowers voters with disabilities.

The Committee should develop best practice accessibility and inclusion guidelines for voting centres. These guidelines should be co-designed with people with disabilities. This will help ensure that accessibility measures are meaningful, not tokenistic, and allow every voter to confidently chose in-person voting if they wish.

Recommendation 1:

The Committee should select voting centres using a whole of journey approach that meets the needs of voters with disabilities, whether or not they use a mobility device.

Recommendation 2:

Each electorate must provide a low-sensory zone at every voting centre for voters who need a quieter, low light space.

Recommendation 3:

Develop a voting centre best practice accessibility and inclusion guideline co-designed with people with disabilities.

Q2. What help should staff at voting centres offer to people with disability?

Staff at voting centre

Ensure voting centre staff complete disability inclusion training to build their confidence in communicating with and assisting people with disabilities.

WDV Youth Expert by Experience Insight
"I think the staff aren't necessarily well-trained when it comes to understanding disability and people's needs. They are in a very busy, hectic environment, whether you vote early or whether you vote on the day. I think it would be really important for them to be trained in understanding hidden disabilities and being able to recognise things like sunflower, so then they are able to help people that have invisible disabilities in the way that they might need."

Not all disabilities are visible. In Australia, 90 percent of the 4.4 million people with disabilities are living with invisible disability. To build disability awareness, accessibility and inclusion for all, appropriate training for voting centre staff is required.

In our consultation majority members highlighted the importance of well-trained on-site staff to support people with disabilities. For voters with disabilities, interacting with election officials who may lack understanding of diverse and hidden disabilities, and how to communicate appropriately, can extremely disempowering and can cause harm.

Thus, Disability and Inclusion training and Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program staff training are crucial to supporting voters with disabilities at all voting centres.

Further, this is also in alignment with the VEC's Disability education and engagement plan (DEEP) to expand the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program and it should be inclusive of all permanent VEC staff and the casual Election staff.

Disability access and inclusion training should be embedded within the VEC as a standard organisational practice. This training should not be limited to staff working with people with disabilities but all permanent staff that includes decision makers, senior leadership, casual election duty staff members.

The training should include social model of disability, human rights model of disability, Australian discrimination laws and person-centred decision making. All staff disability access and inclusion training assists with building the culture of inclusion thus assisting in inclusive service delivery i.e. an accessible voting process for all people with disabilities.

Currently, the Election official (ordinary issuing officer) has the key responsibility to assist any person with special needs.[4] One of the key recommendations by our members is that there should be dedicated and easily identifiable Accessibility Officers in all electorates to assist a person with disabilities if required.

WDV Member Insight

"It would be great if there was one or two clearly designated accessibility officers who can assist people with navigation, any questions they may have about the process, being able to reduce stress around what is happening, information on how to make the process more accessible etc. Adapting their style to work with the individual that is in front of them for example allowing processing time for those with communication needs, respect respecting when someone says that they don't need help, asking how they can help rather than making assumptions or forcing help upon people"

This is outside the remit of the VEC, but political parties should educate their volunteers about access requirements of people with disabilities and ensure they keep voting centre entrances and pathways clear, so the voters don't have to navigate their way around them to gain entry. They should also maintain a respectful distance, as some voters may not feel comfortable being approached or spoken to.

Recommendation 4:

Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) should provide disability access and inclusion training and Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program training to all permanent staff and casual election staff.

[4] Victorian Electoral Commission. 2025. "Employment Guide for Election Casuals and Officials." https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/-/media/42706eaa725a42bca030aa525b90e244.pdf.

Recommendation 5:

Each electorate must have clearly identifiable Accessibility Officers to assist voters with disability when needed.

Q3. If you have a disability (or help someone who does), have you had good or bad experiences at voting centres in previous Victorian elections? What was done well and what could have been better?

Enablers and barriers to accessing voting centres

Ensure ease of access to information enabling simple and safe voting

Updating access requirements

> WDV Youth Experts by Experience Insight
> "When you enrol to vote [the system] to automatically ask [if] you need accessible voting. When there is election coming around, to automatically just send you that [accessible voting] stuff."

Before each election, voters must ensure that their enrolment details are up to date.

Our Youth Experts identified a key barrier. While voters can update their address online, the system doesn't ask for their access needs to vote.

People with permanent disabilities, such as blindness, neurodivergence, or intellectual disabilities, should be able to state their accessibility requirements when enrolling and reviewing their details before each election.

The Committee should prioritise making the voting process simple and accessible for people with disabilities at every stage of the election process.

Young people with disabilities election awareness

> WDV Youth Expert by Experience
> "I don't think there's a really great explanation out there for young [neurodivergent] people who have recently turned 18 that now have ability to vote, to understand what the voting centre really can look or feel like."

Young people with disabilities face multiple barriers to full participation in politics and voting. Limited political education and engagement at high school can leave them unsure about the voting process.

The VEC provides resources to help carers and support workers to assist people with cognitive disabilities to vote. It also delivers voter education sessions for people with intellectual disabilities, led by people with lived experience of disabilities.

However, the Committee should consider introducing mock election voting booths as a youth engagement strategy to assist young neurodivergent adults. Mock elections provide hands-on civic education and increase political awareness and engagement among young neurodivergent adults.[5]

Safe voting practices for victim survivors

WDV Disability Advocate "Too many people, fear of running into perpetrators of violence."

Currently, the VEC does not provide guidance on safe voting practices for victim survivors of domestic and family violence. Voting at a centre should not compromise a voter's safety.[6]

Data suggests an increase in gendered violence towards women and gender diverse people with disabilities. Across different ages, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class women with disabilities experience domestic or family violence at least twice the rate of women without disability.

- 65% of women with disabilities report experiencing at least one form of violence, including physical or sexual violence, intimate partner violence, emotional abuse and/or stalking, by any perpetrator.[7]
- 37% of women with disabilities have experienced emotional or coercive abuse from domestic partners-nearly double the rate for women without disabilities.

Although voting is compulsory, victim survivors may find it difficult to safely access. They face multiple barriers to vote, including safety and privacy concerns, which may

[5] https://www.youthandpolicy.org/author/emily-rainsford. 2024. "The Value of Setting up a Mock Election Polling Station as a Youth Engagement Activity for a Neurodivergent Group Aged 18-25." Youth & Policy. September 12, 2024. https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/mockelections/.

[6] "Safer Voting." 2022. Women's Electoral Lobby. 2022. https://www.wel.org.au/safe_to_vote.

[7] Centre for Non-Violence, and Women with Disabilities Victoria. 2025. "Submission to the UN Human Rights Office | Centre for Non-Violence." *Centre for Non-Violence*. https://www.cnv.org.au/submission-to-the-un-human-rights-office/.

prevent them from voting. Isolation can also limit their access to information about how to vote.

Victim survivors who are fleeing abuse or experiencing stalking may fear that their personal information could be disclosed at the voting centre. They may also fear encountering their preparators at a voting centre.

A women or gender diverse person with disability accompanied by a partner or support person who is also their perpetrator may be influence when completing their ballot papers.

The Committee should develop clear and accessible resources to support safe voting for victim survivors. For example, similar to the *State Voting Guide for Survivors* developed by No More in the United States. These resources should outline for safe voting for victim survivors that includes safe, easy and confidential methods:

- To register to vote
- To update details
- To become a silent elector
- To access election information
- To update requirement for accessible voting format

The Committee should provide foundational domestic and family violence training to VEC staff and Election Officials to provide confidence in communicating with voters who may feel fear, stressed and anxious at the voting centre.

A designated quiet zone with trained staff can support victim survivors to vote safely and efficiently.

Recommendation 6:

Promote the VEC's voting facilitation guide and other resources to engage young people with disabilities and empower them to vote in elections.

Recommendation 7:

Develop a guide to safe voting practices for victim survivors.

Appendix 1: Consultation Data

Purpose and Structure

This appendix supplements the submission made by WDV to Electorate Committee Meeting, presenting insights from WDV's Leadership Hub members, Youth Experts by Experience, and Disability Advocates. In support of the terms of reference for this inquiry, this material will provide a snapshot of experiences from a sample of our members, across a range of ages, backgrounds, and geographic locations.

Anonymised comments and responses are presented to illustrate member and expert experiences and to share their suggestions for improvement of voting centre accessibility.

Methods

Data Collection and Participant Recruitment

An online consultation with WDV's Youth Experts by Experience (Experts)panel occurred in February. This included three Youth Experts who are young women and gender diverse people aged 18-26 with lived experience of disability and systemic discrimination in public life. WDV's Leadership Hub members and disability advocates were sent emails to provide a written or audio response to the consultation questions. Four members provided written responses to the consultation questions.

All responses have been anonymised, with the following acronyms used to identify from which group the comment came:

- YEBE: Youth Expert by Experience
- LH: Leadership Hubs
- DA: Disability Advocate

The consultation began with an overview of the inquiry into voting centres. All participants were asked three questions about the in-person voting experience. The Youth Experts by Experience had a speaking order. Leadership Hub Liaison Officers were sent emails with consultation questions to send it to their Hub members and provide support to the hub members as required.

Limitations

Due to competing timeframes, and WDV staffing, Easy Read consultation questions could not be produced. As such, the data collected may not reflect the breadth of women and gender diverse people with disabilities' experiences of the discrimination

in public life. In particular, the voices of women and gender diverse people with intellectual disabilities and others who may require Easy Read will not be fully reflected in this submission.

Member Insights

Question 1. What criteria should be used when choosing voting centres so that they're accessible to people with disability?

Quotes from YEBE

- I try not to vote in person because it's not accessible at all. Last time I took someone, my support worker, helped me vote because they didn't have a braille option.
- The phone voting is torture. I was just suppose to have everything worked out, who I wanted in what order and all those things. [Had to] remember everything that's read out to me and be able to put them in the order and know who is running and everything. So it feels like I need to have everything worked out beforehand.
- As someone who's not actually [interested in] politics, I actually don't care. It just doesn't work for me. And I don't even know who's running half the time.
- In person, you've got to do that under scrutiny and everything but I do wish there was a quiet space where I did have my support worker. She was looking stuff up for parties and what they were wanting to advertise. It was great that I was able to take the time her to do that. But on the flip side, it was at a spot where everyone else around, I felt like everyone knew that I was taking forever. I don't want to talk too loudly and then it felt like whispering in the corner and it was just a bit weird.
- Personally, I would rather bring someone.
- They need to be looking at ways to make voting more accessible generally and not just go in person.
- Going in person is a pain. Getting braille is so unpredictable and it may happen, it may not happen. It may be available this election but not the next one. We might send it out to you, but actually we won't. You were suppose to register but nobody told you. It's all over the place.
- The voting centre closest to me is at my old primary school and they've done quite a few renovations, but even before that there were so many steps just randomly there.
- I know Australian Electoral Commission website says voting centres suppose to be accessible and near public transport, accessible parking. That's how voting centres are chosen but going back to the voting centre that's closest to me there isn't a public transport nearby, actually the closest one would require the person to walk quite a bit. On voting day that would much longer because of navigating through

other things and people. Finding a car park is impossible, let alone an accessible car park, which I don't even think is available at my school.

- I think the inherent problem is there is no Universal Standard for what voting centres accessibility should look like and what they need to include.
- About transport, you have to work with the bus times and that's assuming that the bus isn't late and often there's not much information available about timetables and stuff for buses specifically. You can't just hop into the car and vote whenever works for you, you have to work with the times of the public transport.
- If someone can't go to that centre to vote, where's the next one?
- Last election, I changed my voting centre based on what was closest to my support worker. Where my support worker could also go and vote because they didn't live in the same electorate as I did.
- When it comes to accessibility, it's not really something I have to look into that much because my state of mind is get in, get out sort of thing with the voting. I always look up information before I go in so I am aware of what I am going to be doing. I do find them in an autism way, very inaccessible because they are busy, they are crowded, it is overwhelming in that way.
- There isn't any quiet rooms.
- I find the wayfinding very simple.
- I find it overwhelming that people outside the voting centre have all different parties who are constantly trying to hand you bits and pieces. You have to kind of say no and sometimes they get up in your space. It's just very overwhelming.
- My better experience was back when I was still living with my parents and I went to my local primary school which I obviously already knew my way around and everything like that.
- From perspective of if you were in a wheelchair, it was accessible because they did have a ramp into the voting area.
- Where I voted last time, a local community centre that was all single level, so I think that was also accessible from a just a physical disability perspective.
- I do find that inside the actual voting centre, stuff is well-labelled with where you've meant to put your papers in and everything.
- I think staff aren't necessarily well-trained when it comes to understanding disability and people's needs, which is a bit unfortunate.
- They are in a very busy hectic environment whether you vote early or whether you vote on the day.
- It would be really important for them to be trained in understanding hidden disabilities and being able to recognise things like sunflower so then they are able to help people that have invisible disabilities in the way they might need.

- Voting centres could learn a lot from what airports have done to accommodate people with a disability or what Marvel Stadium has done with adapting to support people with hidden disabilities.
- Electoral Commission could find local venues like City Council venues that already recognise and understand the Sunflower and utilise staff that way.
- At the very least, having staff there to support that person, especially if they haven't come with a support worker.

Quotes from LH

- I find election offices without automated entry doors very off putting and inaccessible.
- Clear accessible entrance with signage that indicates where to go when to leave as well as when arriving. Sufficient circulation space particularly through doorways. Walkways that are well-maintained, clear of debris and easy to navigate with a variety of mobility aids. People have different lighting requirements so maybe even the option to have a room with brighter lighting and with lower lighting so people can choose based on their needs.
- When the Victorian Government is choosing voting centres they should take in mind an extra room for quietness, and they should take in places with ramps and easy to get to and accessible carparking near the centre.

Quotes from DA

- Accessible from public transport options
- Accessible surrounds and supporters to help navigate in peak hour times
- Low sensory sessions with limited capacity, more generous times to vote with greater understanding and support when needed
- Recognition of the sunflower program (invisible disabilities)

Question 2. What help should staff at voting centres offer to people with disability?

Quotes from YEBE

- Early voting open at least two weeks before the actual election day, that should be enough time to get information about options for accessible voting such as braille registration.
- For them to know about those options, you can sort of go and be like I need to vote but I can't read the print. If you kind of do the process there and get registered and have the braille stuff being posted out to you.
- It's very dependent on your own just knowing what to do.
- They need to change the registration process. I think that would be smarter.
- Having an understanding of disability and accessibility is a start.
- Having some kind of accessible point to that could be a good option at venues.
- As you come in there being staff that can be there just waiting around and who can offer assistance or provide information about where the quiet space might be.

- Having posters about information about where things are, to get into the space that you vote in if they are accessible.
- The booths themselves are quite compact. There isn't generally a lot of space to really have somebody else supporting you with it.
- If you have a mobility aid and you need more space in a booth, the posters could include that information so people know where to go instead of trying to figure out for themselves or have to go to a staff member.
- There is never a priority line so if you are a person that can't actually wait in line, at these voting centres, I kind of have to build up the courage to self-advocate and to go up to whoever the staff member is and be like I can't wait in this long line, I've got a disability, I need you to escort me to the front of the line.
- Whether you vote on the day or early voting there is a long, long line no matter where you go. So there needs to be better understanding around staff being able to escort and support people with disability.
- There's just not a lot of good guidance without having to talk to a staff member about figuring out how you can get the right support that you need as such to be able to vote on the day.
- There is never, ever any seating.

Quotes from LH

- It would be great if there was one or two clearly designated accessibility officers who can assist people with navigation, any questions they may have about the process, being able to reduce stress around what is happening, information on how to make the process more accessible etc.
- Adapting their style to work with the individual that is in front of them for example allowing processing time for those with Communication needs, respect respecting when someone says that they don't need help, asking how they can help rather than making assumptions or forcing help upon people
- I feel that there should be someone going out to the line every 20 minutes or so to make sure that there are no people that need extra support. This includes ability to stand for long periods of time and maybe these people could go up the queue.
- They should also look for people that are struggling in the noisy environment and put them forward too into a quiet room. This quiet room should have the ability for people to vote, maybe a one on one with instructions in that quiet room.

Quotes from DA

- Wayfaring and navigating access outside and entry
- Staff should make themselves known to voters and support when asked, do not assume someone with disability automatically needs help

Question 3. If you have a disability (or help someone who does), have you had good or bad experiences at voting centres in previous Victorian elections? What was done well and what could have been better?

Quotes from YEBE

- It's always super frustrating and people kind of give you looks if you jump the line as well, especially because I have a hidden disability. I get all the nasty looks and things like that.
- Wider booths, they are really really tight to fit in, like, I can barely move my arms.
- There aren't any accessible voting centres overseas.
- For most parts my experience has been good. But I'd like to put that down to the fact that I'm good at self-advocating.
- When you enrol to vote, to identify automatically that you need accessible voting so the onus isn't on the person with a disability as such. Because the nature of disabilities is permanent. They only typically evolve to get worse, unfortunately.
- You've got to, like, constantly keep an eye out. First of all, when is it? Okay, have I received any information about how to register for stuff yet? No, I haven't. It's getting closer. Do I need to Google things? I'm trying to find things, but there's nothing online.
- I am registered, and if I can update my address, and I have to register with you anyway, every single time there's an election, just take note of it.
- Having a disability means that you have to be vigilant about just one more thing.
- Why voting centres don't have automatically a set of braille sheets that, you know, if someone that is vision impaired or blind walks in, they can just have one ready for them if they haven't been able.
- I do telephone voting, and info and braille is not the best for me, because it is not my preferred format, just with the way I learn and take in information, although I can read braille.
- At the bare minimum, I find it super helpful that they have a website that you can just look up and find the voting centers and see where they are, and how close they are to you.
- At least it's easy to look up what district or electorate or whatever it is that you're in as well. That also works really well, because that can be something you don't necessarily know if you're not engaging in politics.
- Perspective of young people, I think young people with disabilities are definitely not educated enough around the voting process either and about what it kind of looks like.
- For people that don't do traditional schooling and bits and pieces because of their disabilities or other bits and pieces but yeah, I don't think there's a really great, like, explanation out there.

- For young [neurodivergent] people that have recently turned 18 that now have the ability to vote, to understand what the voting center really can look like or feel like and, you know, what you might get handed in the process and everything.

Quotes from LH

- I've been talked down to or had my mum support worker talked to instead of me. I had one incident where staff got a bit frustrated because I didn't respond straight away as I was processing what they had said.
- I have found that the physical accessibility suggested online is not always accurate in real life more descriptions would be really helpful.
- Mostly I have found staff to be friendly, take their time with me, and happy to show me and whoever I'm with the best way to get in and out for the centre.

Quotes from DA

- Supports may be available, but they are not well advertised at centres. There should be signs encourage people to ask for Easy Read, large print etc.

Question 4. What stops you from going to an early voting centre?

Quotes from LH

- Uncertainty about how long it may take and what the access and parking is like. I struggle with the sensory environment at times, but this isn't as bad at an early voting centre.
- I go to the early voting centres. This is because lines aren't as busy.

Quotes from DA

- Fear that they will not be as accessible and supported as main voting days.

Question 5. What stops you from going to a voting centre on Election Day?

Quotes from LH

- How busy and overwhelming it is. Lack of accurate info on wheelchair and other access issues. I need support and it can be hard to know how people will treat me. It can be tricky for me to communicate in loud or busy environments.
- The lines are longer.

Quotes from DA

- Too many people, fear of running into perpetrators of violence