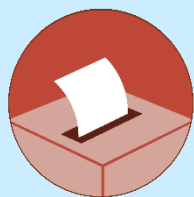


SERVICE CHARTER

2021 Local Government Elections



**Northern Territory
Electoral Commission**
EVERY vote counts!

Foreword

The NT Electoral Commission (NTEC) is an independent government agency responsible for impartial conduct of local government council elections and the statutory election service provider for Northern Territory Local Government general elections.

The 2021 Local Government Council Elections (LG elections) consists of 17 local government councils consisting of 60 elections with 159 positions.

To encourage increased voter participation in the election a number of regional councils will support the NTEC by providing extended voting services in their communities.

Recently introduced legislative changes will be in operation at this election providing support to electors and candidates through on the day provisional voting for eligible electors, a reduction in the number of nominators required to endorse a candidate's nomination to at least one and an extension in the time to receive postal votes.

Due to the ongoing uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, electors are encouraged to register for a postal vote or attend an early voting centre.

The Northern Territory has an area of 1.42million km² with a population of 246,500. Local government councils are responsible for the provision of important services to communities across the Territory. It is therefore important that local government council elections are conducted with a high standard of professionalism, transparency and impartiality.

This service charter provides an overview of the services to be delivered to local government councils and the governance arrangements that underpin the delivery of electoral services.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the remote field teams from the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet that provide significant support in promoting enrolment and election awareness through their *Your Voice, Your Community* campaign. This program supports the local government election by visiting and engaging with residents and stakeholders in remote communities and homelands. This year, information on nominating to become a councillor is also being shared by field teams with the support of the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT).

I am pleased to present the 2021 Local Government Elections Service Charter.

Iain Loganathan
Electoral Commissioner

Introduction

Following amendments to the *Local Government Act 2008* and *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2008*, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) became the service provider for the conduct of all local government general elections from 1 May 2012.

Chapter 8 of the Local Government Act provides for periodic general elections to be conducted in accordance with the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the service commitments and associated standards that key stakeholders at the 2021 Local Government Elections (LG elections) can expect from the NTEC. The document also describes how key stakeholders can assist in ensuring the successful delivery of the elections.

The timetable for conducting the LG elections must be in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act with key milestone events detailed in the election timetable below.

Timetable

Date	Time	
Friday 16 July		Nominations open
Tuesday 27 July	5:00 pm	Electoral roll closes
Thursday 5 August	12:00 noon	Nominations close
	1:00 pm	Declaration of nominations and draw for position on ballot paper/s
Monday 9 August		Postal vote mail-out commences
Monday 16 August	8:00 am	Early voting commences
Monday 16 August		Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 24 August	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatch ceases
Thursday 26 August	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatch ceases
Friday 27 August	6:00 pm	Early voting ceases
Saturday 28 August	8:00 am until 6:00 pm	ELECTION DAY
Saturday 28 August	6:00 pm onwards	Commence counting the votes
Monday 30 August	9:00 am	Commence recheck of all votes
Friday 10 September	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
Friday 10 September	12:00 noon onwards	Final count of postal votes and distribution of preferences
Monday 13 September	TBC	Declaration of election result

Important changes since 2017 elections

Boundary changes

Since the previous election, changes to the City of Darwin, Litchfield Council and West Arnhem Regional Council boundaries and ward structures have come into effect.

City of Darwin

- Fannie Bay, East Point (part) and Ludmilla (part) moved from Lyons Ward to Chan Ward
- Narrows and Woolner (part) moved from Waters Ward to Lyons Ward
- Moil moved from Chan Ward to Waters Ward
- Wagaman moved from Richardson Ward to Waters Water

Litchfield Council

- Creation of 3 wards, North, Central and South Wards (previously 4) and determination of 2 members in each ward

West Arnhem Regional Council.

- Creation of the Minjilang and Warruwi Wards

All other local government council boundaries remain unchanged.

Local government area maps and details of each local government electoral structure can be accessed on the NTEC website at: [Electoral-divisions/local-government-areas](#).

Legislative changes

The *Local Government Act 2019* commenced on 1 July 2021 together with the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2021* and the *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021*.

The new *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021* are, in the most part, similar to the previous *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2008*.

Local government

Service commitments

Local government councils can expect the following from the NTEC.

- Elections to be conducted impartially, effectively, efficiently and professionally
 - Compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements
 - Compliance with an approved COVID-19 Management Plan
 - Timely provision of election cost estimates for consideration by local governments
 - The appointment of competent, informed, and well-trained returning officers
 - Consultation and engagement by NTEC staff with local governments during the election period, including planning
 - Consultation with each local government council to determine service arrangements detailed in the service level agreements
 - Council delivery centre staff are appointed as authorised officers to undertake electoral duties and provided with appropriate training, including the provision of suitable resources
 - Where possible, attendance by NTEC staff at candidate information sessions including the provision of candidate information packs
 - Provision of resources to assist in promoting awareness of the elections
- Provision of comprehensive election information on the NTEC website and accurate and timely election results
 - Clear points of contact for election-related matters including a dedicated call centre
 - Professional, helpful and courteous support and advice from NTEC staff
 - Clear complaints management processes
 - Opportunity to provide feedback during the election period and post-election through an evaluation process
 - Provision of individual election reports for each local government council and a consolidated 2021 Local Government Elections report.

Service standards

The NTEC agrees to deliver the service commitments to the following standards:

- Election cost estimates to be provided to each local government council a minimum of 12 months before the election
- Service level agreements to be negotiated with each local government council and signed by May 2021.
- All complaints and enquiries to be actioned or acknowledged within 24 hours or the next business day and further responded to as soon as practicable
- Provision of individual election reports by November 2021
- Provision of a consolidated election report by 30 June 2022

Local government assistance to the NTEC

To support the conduct of the elections, local government can assist the NTEC by:

- providing suitable voting centre locations
- promoting the elections through local channels; including, notice boards, websites and community radio
- responding to requests from the NTEC in a timely manner
- providing council delivery centre staff that are capable and have the capacity to undertake election duties, including the ability to participate in scheduled training.

Candidates

Service commitments

- Access to information about local government maps and election information
- A candidate handbook and forms available online
- All complaints and enquiries acknowledged within 24 hours or the next business day and followed up as soon as practicable

Service standards

- Clear, accurate and timely information about the rights and responsibilities of candidates
- Access to information sessions (where scheduled) jointly run with the local government council and the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT)
- Provision of a candidate handbook that includes information on the requirements to nominate
- Accurate and accessible resources for candidates available on the NTEC website
- Helpful and courteous service and advice from NTEC staff
- Online access to accurate and timely election results
- The opportunity to provide feedback via an evaluation process post-election

Candidates' assistance to the NTEC

- Prospective candidates have obtained and understand their roles and responsibilities
- Nomination forms are completed correctly and include all necessary supporting information
- Candidates (where identified) have appropriately appointed scrutineers in a timely manner
- All candidate election material and advertising is correctly authorised

Electors

Service commitments

Eligible electors in the Northern Territory can expect the following from the NTEC.

- Accurate and complete electoral rolls for each local government council
- Accurate, timely and accessible information about when, how and where to vote
- Ballot papers, postal voting materials, website and election materials are accurate, accessible and available on time
- Provision of postal voting materials in good time for electors to return their completed ballot papers within specified timeframes

- Helpful and responsive call centre to manage enquiries
- Access to complaints management services
- Courteous, informed and helpful electoral staff
- Accurate and timely reporting of election results

Service standards

- All postal voting materials are dispatched within scheduled timeframes
- All advertised voting centres are accessible, functional and open during scheduled times
- All formal complaints and enquiries to be acknowledged within 24 hours or the next business day and followed up as soon as practicable

Electors assistance to the NTEC

- Electors ensure they are correctly enrolled to vote
- Electors voting by post to ensure they apply in a timely manner, ensure their ballot paper and declaration are complete and returned in time to be added to the count
- Ballot papers are completed in accordance with the instructions to ensure a formal vote is cast

Electoral staff

Service commitment

At local government council elections, local government staff and NTEC personnel may be appointed to carry out roles involved in the conduct of the election. All electoral staff appointed by the NTEC can expect:

- Appropriate and sufficient training for the role to be performed (a combination of online and face-to-face training)
- Provision of comprehensive and easy to read materials (including manuals and guides)
- Clear points of contact for all enquiries

For casual staff engaged by the NTEC

- Efficient and timely recruitment processes, including electronic advice on the success (or otherwise) of their application

- Accurate advice and information regarding the conditions of employment, remuneration and position responsibilities
- Accurate and timely payment (subject to the provision of necessary information)
- Feedback on training and experience in voting centre and an assessment of their performance

Service standards

- Electoral staff receive accurate and timely information on their responsibilities and entitlements (as applicable)
- All electoral staff are provided with the appropriate training in advance of performing their duties, including the provision of support materials
- All electoral staff have access to contacts for enquiries and support
- All complaints and enquiries to be acknowledged within 24 hours or the next business day and followed up as soon as practicable

Electoral staff assistance to the NTEC

- Electoral staff read and understand the training and instructional materials provided
- Electoral staff seek clarification or assistance where required
- Electoral staff to participate in training evaluation to assist in tailoring training requirements prior to the election
- Employment and payment information is accurate and completed in a timely manner with advice provided on any changes
- Timesheets are completed accurately, honestly and signed when finalised

Further Information

The NTEC will deliver an election advertising campaign on a local and Territory level to promote:

- enrolment prior to the close of roll
- early, postal, mobile and election-day voting
- formality information.

In the lead up to and during the election, information on the 2021 Local Government Elections will be progressively published on the NTEC website at www.ntec.nt.gov.au.

Voting information specific to each local government will be available when nominations close and voting schedules are finalised.

Prospective candidates can access the handbook, nomination form and candidate information through the website. This content is downloadable.

The declaration of nominations for the Alice Springs, Barkly, Central Desert and MacDonnell councils will take place in Alice Springs. The declaration of nominations for all other Northern Territory councils will take place in Darwin.

Election results for each local government will be progressively published on the website as they become available on election night and during the counting process.

The NTEC will operate a dedicated call centre during business hours throughout the election period.

Local government staff and candidates are encouraged to contact identified key NTEC staff with any election-related enquiries in the first instance.

Key NTEC staff contacts:

- **Central Australia urban and remote:** Wayne Harlock – 8951 5695 | 0437 252 682
- **Top End remote:** Greg Hibble – 8999 7623 | 0400 355 205
- **Top End urban:** Sue Whyte – 8999 7643 | 0417 894 315

Stay informed:

Link	Path
Newsletter	https://ntec.nt.gov.au/elections/2021-local-government-elections/communications/newsletter
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/NTElectoralCommission
Twitter	https://twitter.com/NTElecComm
Website	https://ntec.nt.gov.au/elections/2021-local-government-elections