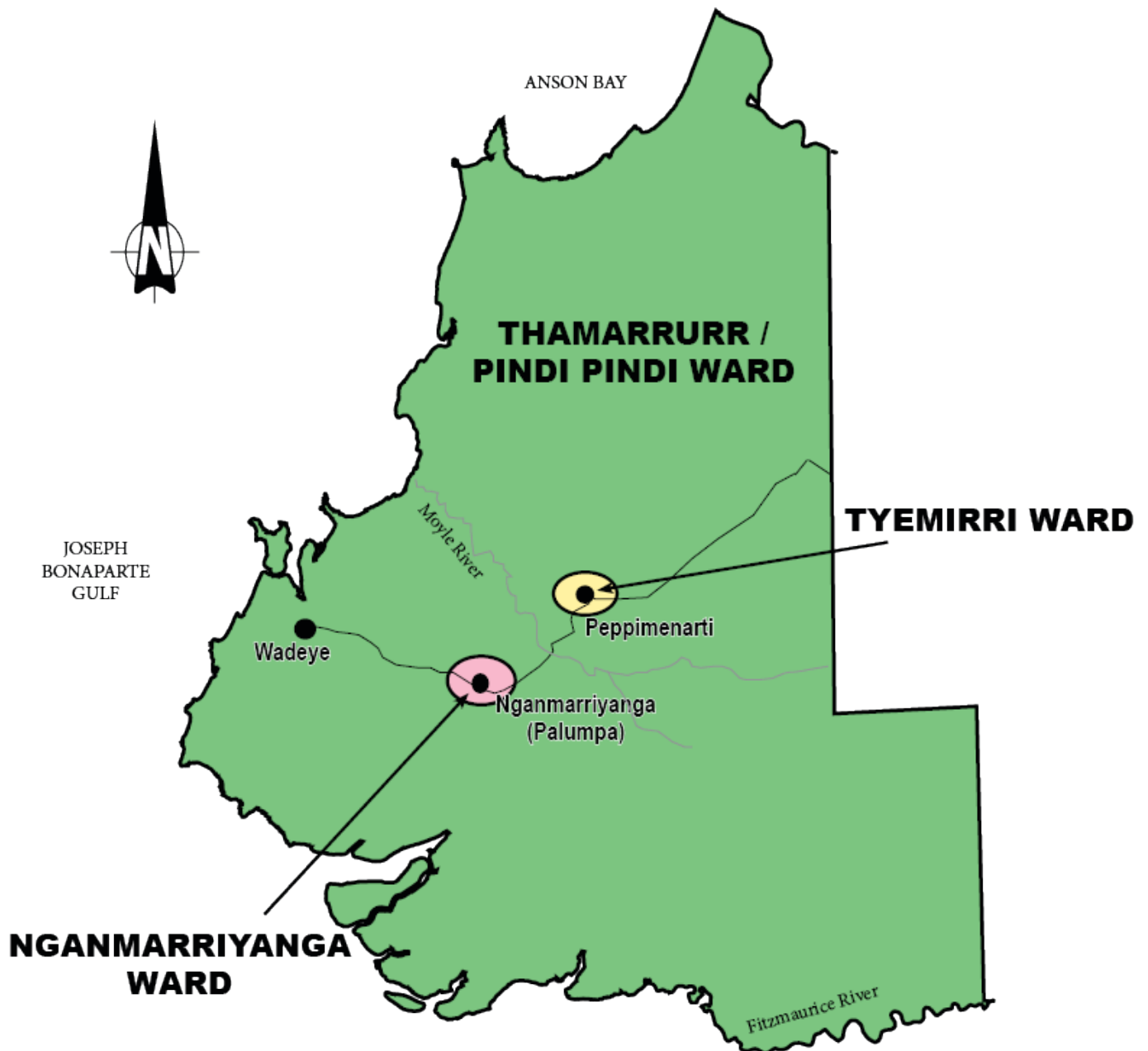




# 2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

## WEST DALY REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTION REPORT





## TIMETABLE

### 2017 NT Council elections

#### Saturday, 26 August 2017

Date	Time	
Friday 14 July		Nominations open
Tuesday 25 July	5:00 pm	Close of electoral roll
Thursday 3 August	12:00 noon	Close of nominations
Friday 4 August	12:00 noon	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Monday 7 August		Postal vote mail-out commences
Monday 14 August	8:00 am	Early voting commences
	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 22 August	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Thursday 24 August	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Friday 25 August	6:00 pm	Early voting ceases
<b>Saturday 26 August</b>		<b>Election day</b>
	8:00 am	Election day voting commences
	6:00 pm	Election day voting ceases
		Mobile voting ceases
		Primary counts of ordinary, postal and early votes commence
		Primary counts of postal, mobile and early votes commence
Monday 28 August	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Thursday 31 August	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Friday 1 September	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
		Distribution of preferences
Monday 4 September	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Election**

- This is the second Local Government (LG) general election under section 85 of the *Local Government Act* (LGA). Amendments to the LGA deferred the election from March 2016 to August 2017. LG general elections are held 12 months after Legislative Assembly (LA) elections.
- This is the first LG general election that all electors had the option to vote by post or vote early. This was due to legislative change that removed the criteria to lodge an early or postal vote.
- The Commissioner of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is the returning officer for local government general elections.
- Greg Hibble was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the West Daly Regional Council, 2017 NT Council elections.
- Electronic mark-off system (eLAPPS) was used at all voting centres.
- An election charter detailing the NTEC's service commitments was finalised on 4 May 2017 and sent to the council. The document was also available on the website
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the West Daly Regional Council and the NTEC was entered into on 1 June 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

### **Council**

West Daly Regional Council consists of three wards: Nganmariyanga, Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi, and Tyemirri.

The council consists of six elected council members. This includes one elected councillor from Nganmariyanga Ward, four elected councillors from Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi Ward, and one elected councillor from Tyemirri Ward.

As per the SLA, West Daly Regional Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections:

- Accommodation for remote team members in Wadeye and Peppimenarti.
- Voting premises in Peppimenarti, Wadeye, Emu Point and Palumpa.
- Promotion of the election through council social media sites.
- Council staff to act as community assistants during remote mobile voting.
- Council staff to act as a remote team member.
- An electoral roll cleansing exercise.

### **Boundary changes**

There were no gazetted changes to the boundaries resulting from the 2015 review of electoral representation.

### **ENROLMENT**

Enrolment initiatives specific to West Daly Regional Council included an electoral roll cleansing project that commenced in March and concluded in June in the following communities: Wadeye, Peppimenarti, Palumpa and Emu Point. The project identified a number of deceased and duplicated electors that were removed from the electoral roll.

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July 2017 at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 1,796 electors enrolled for West Daly Regional Council.

### Enrolment numbers by ward

COUNCIL	WARD	ENROLMENT
West Daly Regional Council	Nganmarriyanga	198
	Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi	1,504
	Tyemirri	94
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,796</b>

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

### Campaign

The public awareness campaign for the 2017 NT Council elections included enrolment and voting information (early, postal, remote and election day) disseminated across social media, television, radio, councils, LGANT, the Department of Housing and Community Development, as well as print and digital platforms. The public awareness campaign began in May and intensified in July until election day on Saturday 26 August.

### Website

The 2017 NT Council elections website was launched in early June and this provided comprehensive information for candidates and voters. It also hosted dedicated election results pages, included details on vote counting, and showed all remote, early and election day voting centre information. The website remains live for a number of months following the election.

### Newsletter

An election newsletter was emailed regularly to stakeholders including councils and candidates, from 5 May with the final newsletter emailed on 27 August. A total of 12 newsletters and five supplementary emails were sent during this period. The newsletters were also available on the NTEC website with links shared on Facebook and Twitter.

### Advertising – print, radio, television

Three advertisements were developed for airing on television, radio, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter: enrol and close of roll (15 secs); early, election day and formal voting (15 secs and 30 secs). The audio versions of these advertisements were interpreted into nine Aboriginal languages and aired across the Northern Territory through the radio stations appropriate to the language group. These advertisements were also available on the NTEC website, NTEC's YouTube channel and were heavily promoted through social media.

Print advertising promoting enrolment and providing election information appeared in the Rural Weekly, Centralian Advocate, NT News and Off the Leash magazine.

Online promotion of these ads also took place with the Rural Weekly, Alice Springs News and Off the Leash. There was also an extensive digital marketing campaign about enrolment, postal and early voting, election day and formal voting that ran from 7 June through to election day, 26 August.

Posters promoting enrolment, nominations and voting were made available to West Daly Regional Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Rural Weekly and the NT News.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and the election participation through 39 interviews with Northern Territory media including ABC Alice Springs, MIX104.9, Aboriginal Broadcasting Network, CAAMA radio and the Centralian Advocate.

## Call centre

A call centre was established on Wednesday 2 August and ran until Monday 28 August. Staff assisted electors with a variety of election enquiries during this period.

## Call centre enquiries

ENQUIRY TYPE	ENQUIRY NUMBERS
Total phone calls	3,254
Emails to ntec@nt.gov.au	1,379
Non-voter excuses lodged	615
Enrolment	694
Postal voting	462

## Candidate information sessions

A candidate information session was not held in the West Daly Regional Council area. However, candidate information packs were supplied to council and regional staff of the Department of Housing and Community Development to distribute to potential candidates.

## Email and SMS

Email was used to contact over 95 electors in the West Daly Regional Council area who provided these details on their enrolment form. Across the Northern Territory, 30,000 emails were sent advising electors about early and election-day voting centres. A further 106 SMS' were sent to West Daly Regional Council electors reminding them to vote on election day.

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 10 nominations for councillor across the three wards.

The declaration of nominations took place at the NTEC Darwin office at 12:00 noon on Friday 4 August. This event was attended by the general public, nominees, council representatives and the media. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate.

### Summary of nominations/candidates for West Daly Regional Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Nganmariyanga Ward (1 position)	Sharon Louise CANN
	Ralph NARBURUP
Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi Ward (4 positions)	Mark NINNAL
	Mark TUNMUCK-SMITH
	Wally MINJIN
	Andrew BROWN
	Irene Janet DUMOO
	Terry SAMS
Tyemirri Ward (1 position)	Mark MARTIN
	John WILSON

### Electronic voter mark-off

An electronic voter mark-off system is now used in all voting centres across the Northern Territory. The system records when someone has voted anywhere in the NT in real time. The voter mark-off system also alleviates the necessity to have paper certified lists therefore improving efficiencies in voting centres when finding voters on the electoral roll.

### **Early voting centre**

Legislative changes in 2015 allows all electors the option to vote early without the need to meet any eligibility criteria. Overall there is a trend towards voting early across the Northern Territory. Voting for West Daly Regional Council was facilitated by remote voting teams.

### **Postal voting**

Legislative changes in 2015 allow all electors the option to apply for a postal vote without meeting any eligibility criteria.

There were 40 postal votes issued to electors within the West Daly Regional Council area, and 34 (85 per cent) admitted to the count.

### **Remote voting teams**

Remote voting teams visited the following locations in the lead-up to election day. The teams issued votes for West Daly Regional Council only.

### **Mobile and remote voting outcomes and votes issued**

<b>LOCATIONS</b>	<b>VOTES ISSUED</b>
Emu Point	36
Merrepen	21
Palumpa	119
Wadeye	368
Woodycupaldiya	14
Wudapuli	6

### **Election day voting centre**

Election day was Saturday 26 August. There were no election day voting centres for West Daly Regional Council as voting was conducted by remote voting teams.

## **ELECTION**

### **Voting**

The voting system for local government elections is Proportional Representation (PR):

- Electors must number all the boxes on their ballot paper sequentially starting with the number one for their first choice.
- First preference votes for each candidate on formal ballot papers are counted, then a quota is calculated.
- The quota is the total number of formal ballot papers plus one, divided by the number of vacancies.
- The candidates with votes equal to or greater than the quota are elected. If all vacancies are filled, the election is complete.
- If not, preferences are distributed to the other candidates until all vacancies have been filled.

To learn more about the PR system, go to the [vote counting](#) page on the NTEC website.

### Vote counting – election night

Immediately after the close of voting at 6:00pm on election day, there was:

- a count of the first preference votes for early/mobile and postal votes at the Darwin scrutiny centre.

### Post-election night scrutinies

A recheck of votes was undertaken during the week after election day, followed by a count of declaration, absent and further postal votes.

All votes received for the West Daly Regional Councillor positions were entered into an electronic count system (Easy count) and then re-entered for verification purposes.

Voters that applied for a postal vote were expected to complete their ballot papers by 6:00 pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2017. Postal ballot papers then had to be received by 12:00 noon, Friday 1 September to be included in the count.

Determination of the quota and the distribution of preferences took place after the cut-off for the return of postal vote ballot papers. Election results were made available on the results pages of the website on Friday, 1 September 2017.

### Election outcomes for West Daly Regional Council

There were 10 candidates contesting six councillor positions across three wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

#### Voter participation by ward

There were 1,702 people on the electoral roll in the West Daly Regional Council Wards of Nganmariyanga and Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi for the 2017 NT Council elections, a total of 610 (36 per cent) voted.

WARD	ENROLMENT AT 25 JULY 2017	FORMAL VOTES	INFORMAL VOTES	TOTAL
Nganmariyanga	198	107	0	107
Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi	1,504	446	57	503
Tyemirri	94	<i>Voting not required</i>		

### Election of one Councillor – Nganmariyanga Ward

At the close of nominations there were two candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Sharon Louise CANN	10
Ralph NARBURUP	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 54.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Ralph Narburup received the quota at count number 1

Ralph Narburup was duly elected.



### Election of four Councillors – Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi Ward

At the close of nominations there were seven candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes recorded were as follows:

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Mark NINNAL	23
Mark TUNMUCK-SMITH	137
Wally MINJIN	57
Andrew BROWN	115
Irene Janet DUMOO	22
Terry SAMS	72
Mark MARTIN	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>446</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 90.

Following the distribution of preferences and in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (*Electoral*) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Mark Tunmuck-Smith and Andrew Brown received the quota at count number 1
- Terry Sams received the quota at count number 5
- Wally Minjin received the quota at count number 7

Mark Tunmuck-Smith, Andrew Brown, Terry Sams and Wally Minjin were duly elected.

### Election of one Councillor – Tyemirri Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and John Wilson was elected.

### Declaration of the election results

#### Declared election results for West Daly Regional Council

Nganmariyanga Ward (1 vacancy)	Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi Ward (4 vacancies)	Tyemirri Ward (1 vacancy)
Ralph Narburup	Mark Tunmuck-Smith Andrew Brown Terry Sams Wally Minjin	John Wilson

A copy of the full distribution of preferences is available on the 2017 NT Council elections [results page](#) of the website.

### Election costs

The SLA estimated the cost of the election for West Daly Regional Council to be \$27,520. Following the election, the costs was \$24,564 with a difference of \$2,956.

### Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$6,884
Staffing	\$7,186
Vehicle costs	\$1,992
Operational costs	\$8,502
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$24,564</b>

## **ISSUES OF NOTE**

### **Voter participation**

- The continued lack of voter participation in various communities across all levels of government elections in West Daly is becoming a concerning matter. Having a turnout of only 36 per cent is not a healthy reflection of democracy. Further discussion is required on this issue.

### **Candidate information sessions**

- In 2017, the NTEC was unable to provide candidate information sessions across all Regional Councils, and where the agency did provide this service, it relied upon the generosity of councils to fund electoral staff to provide face-to-face candidate information sessions. Unfortunately, the NTEC was not able to provide this for West Daly Regional Council.
- The NTEC needs to work with Government to address this funding shortfall for future electoral events.

### **Informality**

In the post-election phase, once the 21-day period for objections had expired, a survey of informal ballot papers for West Daly Regional Council was conducted.

- A total of 57 informal votes were received for the Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi Ward. During the informality survey it was identified that 95 per cent were deemed unintentionally informal, of which most had duplicated numbers or hadn't completed numbers in all boxes.
- Further education and awareness may be required prior to and/or during the voting process to address the informality issue.
- No informal votes were cast in the Nganmariyanga Ward, this was attributed to only having two candidates on the ballot paper.