



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

MEDIA GUIDE

This handbook outlines election information designed to assist media with their enquiries during Northern Territory general Legislative Assembly and Local Government (Council) election periods.

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1. Essential media information

Keep up-to-date with all Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) and election related information via:

- ntec.nt.gov.au
- [Facebook.com/NTElectoralCommission](https://www.facebook.com/NTElectoralCommission)
- twitter.com/NTElecComm
- [instagram.com/electionsnt/](https://www.instagram.com/electionsnt/)

Enrolling to vote

The electoral roll is managed by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). Enrolling to vote can be done online at aec.gov.au or ntec.nt.gov.au. Hard copy enrolment forms are available at all AEC and NTEC offices, as well as Australia Post and Local Government (Council) offices.

Electors can enrol to vote from the age of 16; however, they can only cast their vote once they have turned 18.

All electors should ensure they are correctly enrolled and can do this online at aec.gov.au or via ntec.nt.gov.au.

Election information

A dedicated website for each election conducted is provided by the NTEC, with information on enrolment, voting, nominations, applying for a postal vote, forms and handbooks, media releases as well as early and Election Day voting centres.

The NTEC provides electoral services to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, councils and other bodies, and conducts a redistribution of electoral boundaries for the Legislative Assembly within each four year fixed electoral cycle. The federal election and redistribution of federal electoral boundaries are both conducted by the AEC. Councils conduct their own representative reviews.

Voting

Voting is compulsory for Legislative Assembly and Local Government (Council) elections.

All enrolled electors can vote at an early voting centre, by postal vote, mobile/remote voting team or on Election Day. Postal vote applications can be completed online at ntec.nt.gov.au

Timelines for postal vote applications vary and are determined in legislation.

For a Local Government (Council) election, electors can apply for a postal vote three months prior to Election Day.

For the Legislative Assembly, electors can apply at any time during the calendar year in which the election is held.

Mobile/remote, early and Election Day voting schedules are published on the NTEC election website prior to the commencement of voting.

The NTEC uses electronic certified lists at all voting centres to mark-off electors when they vote.

Absent vote

If an elector attends an Election Day voting centre outside their Legislative Assembly division, they can cast an absent vote. This vote is placed in an envelope and counted after Election Day.

Absent voting is available at nominated Election Day voting centres for Local Government (Council) elections.

Declaration vote

If a voter is not on the electoral roll but believes they should be, they can complete a declaration vote. Similar to an absent vote, this is placed in an envelope and counted if found to be eligible, after Election Day.

Voting assistance

Where an elector requires help with marking their ballot paper, assistance can be provided by a person nominated by the voter, or by a voting official. How to vote information has been interpreted into 13 Aboriginal languages and displayed on tablets.

Results

Election results are posted following the vote count on the virtual tally room, which is accessed via the NTEC election website.

Postal votes have either two weeks (Legislative Assembly) or one week (Local Government/Councils) to be returned following an election.

The final declaration of the election result will take place once all the votes have been counted, including postal votes.

Contacting candidates

Names and contact details of candidates will be available on the NTEC election website following the close of nominations and once details have been provided, and permission to publish has been received. Not all candidates provide contact details for publication.

Election night results

The NTEC's virtual tally room displays all election results as they become available. For both Legislative Assembly and Local Government (Council) elections, indicative first preference votes are counted and progressive tallies are posted on election night.

However, for Local Government elections, no further vote numbers are available until all votes have been counted in the week following Election Day, except for Mayoral counts where progressive counts will be shown.

Media enquiries

All general media enquiries go to mark.wilton@nt.gov.au or (08) 8985 7635.

2. Types of elections

The [Electoral Act 2004](#) outlines the processes for conducting an election for the Northern Territory Parliament.

Procedures for conducting council elections are outlined in the [Local Government Act 2008](#) and the [Local Government \(Electoral\) Regulations](#).

Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and council elections are conducted using postal and attendance voting. In some jurisdictions in Australia, particular elections may be conducted using postal voting only. Online voting for overseas electors or those with. Federal elections are conducted by the AEC.

There are 25 Legislative Assembly divisions, 17 local governments and two federal electorates in the Northern Territory.

Voting trends

At attendance elections, the majority of voters will cast their vote at early or Election Day voting centres. Early voting is increasing in popularity with 36 per cent of electors opting to vote early at the 2016 Territory (Legislative Assembly) election.

Voter turnout

Of the approximately 170,000 NT eligible electors, only 135,506 were on the electoral roll at the time of the 2016 Territory election. Of these, only 100,270 voted. This is a voter turnout rate of only 74 per cent, which is in stark contrast to the national average of 91 per cent at the July federal election.

Encouraging Territorians to engage with democracy is an ongoing focus and challenge for the NTEC.



3. Roles and responsibilities

Returning Officer

The Returning Officer runs each general election and has a legal responsibility for the conduct of the election including management of nominations, vote counting and results declarations for the election. The Returning Officer also makes determinations about the formality of contested votes. The Electoral Commissioner is the Returning Officer for general elections in the Northern Territory.

NTEC

Northern Territory Electoral Commission conducts Legislative Assembly and Local Government (Council) general elections.

The NTEC provides independent, impartial, high quality and accessible electoral services that are effective, efficient and delivered in accordance with the law.

4. Nominations & candidates

Nominations

To nominate for an elected Local Government (Council) position, a person *must* be enrolled for their council area. However, for a Legislative Assembly position, a person must only be *eligible* to be enrolled as a voter for the division in which they wish to stand; they do not need to actually be enrolled.

All candidates must also be an Australian citizen or British subject, and not otherwise disqualified under the *Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978*. Links to all relevant electoral legislation is available via the NTEC's website at ntec.nt.gov.au.

Anyone wishing to nominate must complete the required nomination process during the time designated prior to the close of nominations.

In the Northern Territory, this includes the provision of a photograph for printing on the ballot paper. A handbook detailing nomination requirements is available at ntec.nt.gov.au.

Late nominations are NOT accepted.

Withdrawal of a nomination

A nomination for an election may be withdrawn but must be done in writing to the Returning Officer before 12:00 noon on the close of nominations. A withdrawal form is available at ntec.nt.gov.au.

Candidate information

A candidate handbook for both Legislative Assembly and Local Government (Council) elections is available from ntec.nt.gov.au.

Each handbook outlines the election timetable, regulations, the vote counting system, the election process, eligibility, electoral roll requirements, disqualification, a nomination form and instructions for lodgement of the completed form, and other useful information.

Uncontested elections

If, at the close of nominations, the number of candidates is equal to, or less than, the number of vacancies for any election, this is an uncontested election.

The Returning Officer will declare these candidates elected on, or after, Election Day and provide public notice of their election.

If the uncontested election leaves further vacancies to be filled on the council, a further election may be required to fill the remaining vacancies.

5. The voting process

NT Legislative Assembly

The NT Legislative Assembly election has full preferential voting. This means a voter must show a preference for all candidates listed on the ballot paper. To be elected, a candidate must receive a majority of the total formal votes in the count, i.e. 50 per cent + 1.

NT Local Government (Council)

The NT Local Government (Council) elections also uses full preferential voting where voters must show a preference for all candidates on the ballot paper.

The counting system used is [proportional representation](#) (PR), an electoral system used for elections in multi-member jurisdictions. In Australia, the PR system used is the single transferable vote (STV) where each vote can be transferred between candidates in the order of the voter's preferences. A candidate is elected when his or her total number of votes equals or exceeds the quota ... [read more](#).

In council elections, electors may vote for an ordinary member (councillor, alderman) as well as a principal member (mayor). This means some council elections will require more than one ballot paper.

If a candidate stands as both a principal member and ordinary member and is elected to the position of principal member, that candidate is then excluded from the count for the ordinary member. The preferences are then distributed to the next available candidates.

Electors in **unincorporated areas** do not vote in council elections. These include the Darwin Waterfront, and the townships of Nhulunbuy, Alyangula and Yulara. More info at ntec.nt.gov.au.

Non-voters are sent a notice asking that a reason be stated for not voting. If this is deemed not to be valid and sufficient, formal proceedings may be commenced. The fine for not voting in the Legislative Assembly elections is \$25, and \$50 for Local Government (Council) elections. Fine amounts are defined in the relevant legislation. Councils determine whether to fine non-voters.

6. Advertising and campaign material

Authorising electoral matter

For **Legislative Assembly elections**, all campaign material and electoral matter must clearly state the name and address of the person authorising the publication or distributions.

Requirements for authorisation also apply to broadcasters, newspapers and printers of electoral matter.

Authorisation must include the full street address including suburb or locality, at which the person can usually be contacted. The use of a post office box is not permitted.

Electoral advertisements outside an election period should also be authorised.

Candidates, political parties, commentators, publishers, broadcasters and the media are advised to become familiar with the electoral offences listed in the Electoral Act.

Authorising for **Local Government (Council) elections** is the same as Legislative Assembly elections. Candidates, publishers, broadcasters and all media are advised to become familiar with the electoral offences listed in the Local Government Act.

Media blackout

The [electronic media blackout](#) for Territory elections begins at midnight on the Wednesday before Election Day until the close of voting on Election Day. There is no electronic media blackout for Local Government (Council) elections.

Canvassing and signage

Canvassing for votes at a Legislative Assembly election is prohibited within 100 metres of an Election Day voting centre. Canvassing at an early voting centre and mobile voting centre/location is prohibited within 10 metres.

Canvassing for votes at a Local Government (Council) election is prohibited within 10 metres of all voting centres.

More information can be found on the [website](#).

Social and online media

The NTEC takes the common-sense view that candidates advertising electoral matter on their own social media channels, are obviously self-authorising. However, advertisements, including sponsored links published online, must carry or directly link to, an authorisation message.

Candidates and other producers of electoral matter are encouraged to seek legal advice on this matter.

Posters and billboards

Posters and billboards must be properly authorised. Councils have jurisdiction over advertising material display. Power and Water Corporation and the NTG have policies regarding advertising on their assets.

Letters and direct mail

Leaflets, flyers and other forms of unaddressed direct mail delivered to households must be properly authorised.

Producers and distributors should be aware of the rules relating to such material. Letters addressed to individual voters by name do not have to include an authorisation but must clearly identify the originator of the letter.

5. Complaints

Complaints about candidate conduct and advertising material are referred to the Electoral Commissioner.

Complaints are treated as confidential in all instances. Evidence specific to a complaint must be provided to the NTEC before any action can be considered.

