

2024 TERRITORY ELECTION

SERVICE **PLAN**

This Service Plan provides all election stakeholders with early advice on how the election will be delivered.



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Note: *Some information within this Service Plan may change during the election period. Updated information will be provided on the NTEC website. Electoral participants and stakeholder can also stay up to date by subscribing to the NTEC newsletter, to subscribe go to the NTEC website.*

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Introduction

Delivering elections in the Territory requires substantial planning, preparation, and coordination.

The Service Plan aims to provide information to support planning and positive participation in the election, promote transparency in the election process and the independence of the NT Electoral Commission (NTEC).

The NTEC aims to provide a positive voting experience for electors and access to important information about the election process for all electoral participants (including electors) and stakeholders.

The Service Plan is a cornerstone document, guiding the NTEC's planning and preparation for the 2024 Territory Election and facilitates effective co-ordination of election activities.

The Service Plan is a resource for all electoral participants and stakeholders, providing information on the activities and processes for delivering the 2024 Territory election. This information aims to support electoral participants to plan and prepare their activities accordingly.

Furthermore, the Service Plan is an important resource for employees and service providers who support the NTEC to deliver elections by providing information on the election relating to the area of contribution, highlighting the importance of their involvement.

The understanding of the election process, roles, rights, and responsibilities by all electoral participants and stakeholders contributes to delivering a high-quality electoral services and a successful election.

Agency values

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is committed to its purpose, vision and agency values.

Purpose: Provide independent and high quality electoral services to Territorians.

Vision: Maintain public confidence in electoral processes in the Northern Territory and raise awareness to support participation.

Values:

- **COLLABORATE** – we are inclusive and work with our stakeholders and Territorians for the best outcome.
- **INTEGRITY** – we conduct ourselves in a fair, honest and ethical manner in everything we do.
- **PROFESSIONAL** – we are committed to providing high quality, efficient and client focussed services to stakeholders and Territorians.
- **TRUST** – stakeholders and Territorians are confident that we deliver fair and transparent services to a high standard.

Legal framework

The NT Electoral Commission is responsible for the conduct of all Northern Territory Legislative Assembly general elections and by-elections.

The conduct of the 2024 Territory Election will be governed by the:

- *Electoral Act 2004*
- *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act (1978) (Cth)*
- Electoral Regulations 2004.

The Northern Territory has one house of parliament, the Legislative Assembly, made up of 25 elected members, one for each of the Territory's 25 electoral divisions.

The 2024 Territory Election will be held on Saturday 24 August 2024 to elect all 25 members.

There have been no legislative changes to the *Electoral Act 2004* or Electoral Regulations 2004 since the 2020 Territory Election.

Key



Legislation reference



New initiative

ELECTION

HIGHLIGHTS

The following provides an overview of the key aspects of the 2024 Territory Election. They highlight the growth in the number of eligible voters compared to the previous election, the extensive employment and logistical efforts undertaken by the NTEC, and the various voting options available to ensure accessibility for all electors.

2024 Territory Election

**Approx. 155,000 eligible voters
* April 2024**

ELECTION employment

**Over 500 casual staff employed to
support the election**

VOTING early

12 early voting centres

VOTING on election day

31 election day voting centres

REMOTE voting teams

**16 remote voting teams providing voting
services at 171 remote locations**

URBAN mobile voting

**3 urban mobile voting teams (Alice
Springs, Darwin and Katherine) providing
voting services at 9 locations**

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

Privacy



The NTEC is bound by the *Information Act 2002* as well as the privacy obligations in the *Electoral Act 2004* and the *Electoral Act 1918 (Cth)*.

There are strict provisions about privacy relating to the handling of personal information from the electoral roll, and for upholding the secrecy of the vote when providing assistance to voters who need help to cast their vote.

Management of misinformation and disinformation

The spread of misinformation and disinformation during elections across Australia is increasing.

Misinformation is false information shared without harmful intent, often due to misunderstanding or error.

Disinformation, on the other hand, is deliberately false information spread with the intention to deceive or manipulate.



The NTEC has established an online misinformation and disinformation register for the 2024 Territory Election to publicly highlight and correct inaccurate, prominent and harmful information that relates to the conduct of the election and electoral processes.

The register will summarise the identified misinformation and disinformation, provide relevant correct information and list any actions taken to counter the false claims. The register is limited to content that regards electoral processes only so that it does not interfere with political debate or the NTEC's duty to conduct elections impartially.

Members of the public and election stakeholders can bring items they consider to be misinformation and disinformation about electoral process to the attention of the NTEC via email to ntec@nt.gov.au.



The NTEC will consider the lawfulness of certain electoral communications and take enforcement action where breaches of the *Electoral Act 2004* have occurred.

However, the NTEC has no role in enforcing truth in political advertising in the NT.

Feedback and complaints management

The NTEC values all feedback to ensure continuous improvement to its processes and practices.

To support the 2024 Territory Election, a dedicated service centre will manage feedback and complaints from the public through a variety of modes including by email, telephone and on social media.

Complaints alleging breaches of law should be in writing and include any supporting evidence.

The NTEC treats feedback and complaints confidentially, however in some circumstances the NTEC may be required to disclose information to resolve the feedback or complaint.

Where parties involved in a complaint have publicised the matter, the NTEC may confirm the existence of the complaint with the media, but will not discuss the details.

The NTEC may also make public comment regarding feedback or complaints where necessary to ensure electors are aware of a situation and/or have accurate information.

The feedback and complaints management approach for the 2024 Territory Election, including details of the process for providing feedback or lodging a complaint and service expectations, will be available on the NTEC website.

Constructive compliance

A 'constructive compliance' approach is in place and focuses on providing electoral participants with resources to understand and comply with their obligations.

Where necessary and appropriate, enforcement tools may be used to assist compliance.

Complaints alleging a breach of the law will be assessed and investigated or referred to another agency as appropriate.



The NTEC may pursue legal proceedings against any person committing an offence against the *Electoral Act 2004*.

Systems security

The NTEC operates in a shared services environment and receives security support through the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. The NT Government employs contemporary cyber security controls and active monitoring in line with Australian Government recommendations. External security testing and assurance occurs to protect electoral information and systems.

Storage and security of ballot papers



The NTEC manages the security and storage of ballot papers in accordance with a number of provisions in the *Electoral Act 2004*.



All ballot materials must be kept securely until the completion of any proceedings with the Court of Disputed Returns, or until the Commissioner is satisfied they are no longer required for any further functions under the *Electoral Act 2004*.

The NTEC employs a ballot paper manager who is responsible for the security and storage of ballot papers during the election period, including access to the secure facilities or areas where ballot papers are held.

Further ballot paper security measures include:

- quality control measures to ensure ballot papers are printed accurately and in the quantities specified
- presence of NTEC staff during the printing process to ensure adherence to the quality control measures
- use of secure satchels and seals for the transfer of live ballot materials
- secure storage of ballot papers that can only be accessed by authorised staff.

Court of Disputed Returns

Eligible persons may dispute the validity of an election by making an application to the Court of Disputed Returns. The eligible persons are:

- a candidate in the election
- a voter entitled to vote at that election
- the NT Electoral Commission
- a person whose nomination as a candidate was rejected by the NTEC.

The application must be made no later than 21 days after the day fixed for the return of the writ for the election. For the 2024 Territory Election, the last day for disputing the validity of the election is Monday 21 October.

Often small margins are an impetus to petition the Court of Disputed Returns following an election. The NTEC has a recount policy where the Electoral Commissioner will initiate a recount for divisions where the margin is 100 votes or less. Additionally a recount can be requested by any candidate at any time during the count process.

Evaluation

Post-election, the NTEC will review the 2024 Territory Election against the Service Plan within an evaluation framework with the aim to formulate recommendations for legislative reforms as well as internal business improvements. The evaluation outcomes will be included in the 2024 Territory Election Report.

The evaluation framework will be developed to have the following focus areas:

Staffing

- Survey election staff about their satisfaction with recruitment, training, payment and operational support.
- Review work, health and safety incidents and management.

Systems

- Assess the performance of IT systems, in particular the election management system and the integrated electronic mark-off application.
- Review the effectiveness of shared services support arrangements.

Communications

- Survey voters and stakeholders about the effectiveness of the communications campaign.
- Collect data about how people accessed and received information about the election.

Stakeholder engagement

- Analyse interactions with stakeholder resources, information sessions and meetings/ direct communications.
- Seek feedback from external service providers and Northern Territory Government agencies.

Service centre

- Measure responsiveness to public and stakeholder queries, as well as complaints.
- Analyse interactions with the misinformation and disinformation register.

Voting services

- Survey voters and stakeholders about the accessibility of voting services.
- Analyse interactions with voter assistance resources available in voting centres.

Counts and results

- Assess the timeliness of completion of all counts and publication of results.
- Review the effectiveness of resourcing scrutiny processes within the application of new fatigue management measures.

Legislative compliance

- Asses compliance with statutory requirements.
- Engage an external contractor to conduct a compliance review of financial disclosure obligations of candidates, political parties, associated entities and third party campaigners.

Strategic reviews following a general election often lead to new initiatives being trialled at the local government general elections (where applicable) in the following year or at subsequent Territory by-elections.

Election report

The NTEC will produce a 2024 Territory Election report which is presented to the Speaker of the NT Legislative Assembly and tabled in parliament. The NTEC's general election reports make recommendations for legislative reforms relating to elections as well as internal policies, and provide information and data regarding:

- legislative reforms leading up to the election
- the electoral boundary redistribution preceding the general election
- the public awareness campaign and communications
- enrolment
- candidate and party liaison
- voting services
- voting outcomes (including turnout and participation)
- post-election management (including non-voter processing)
- corporate activities.

ELECTION

TIMETABLE

- **Monday 1 January:** • Applications for postal votes open
- **Thursday 1 August:** • Issue of the writ
• Nominations open
- **Friday 2 August:** • Electoral roll closes (5:00pm)
- **Thursday 8 August:** • Nominations close (12 noon)
• Declaration of nominations and draw for ballot paper positions (1:00pm)
- **Monday 12 August:** • Postal vote mail out commences, early voting and mobile voting commences
- **Saturday 24 August:** • Election day
• Initial count of ordinary, early and postal votes (6:00pm)
- **Monday 26 August:** • Fresh scrutiny, processing of absent and declaration votes commences
- **Friday 6 September:** • Deadline for the return of postal votes (12 noon)
• Distribution of preferences (commences as soon as practicable after completing the counts of the final intake of postal votes)
- **Monday 9 September:** • Declaration of the election result
- **Monday 30 September:** • Last day to return the writ
- **Monday 21 October:** • Last day for disputing the validity of the election.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

External service providers

To conduct the 2024 Territory Election, the NTEC engages with external service providers to support logistics, materials and communications, procuring services such as:

- accommodation
- advertising
- compliance auditing
- creative (for public awareness campaign)
- freight and courier services
- materials
- postal services
- printing services and paper products
- travel and transport
- website design and support.

Arrangements with NTG agencies

Delivering the 2024 Territory Election involves collaboration and support from a number of Northern Territory Government agencies responsible for providing shared service support.

The Department of Corporate and Digital Development provides significant support for the NTEC across a number of business units:

- Agency Business Systems
- Banking Services
- Budgets and Finance
- Cyber Security
- Digital Learning and Innovation

- Digital Solutions
- ICT Technology Services
- NT Fleet
- NT Property Management
- Payroll
- Project Management Office
- Web Design and Support
- Workforce Services.

Staffing

During major elections a significant casual workforce is engaged, including voting centre staff, as well as short term casual contracts (3-6 months) and a small number of positions filled by electoral specialists.

For the 2024 Territory Election, there will be approximately 500 extra election positions filled by approximately 400 staff, as a large number of staff will work more than one position during the election period.

Staffing costs are the greatest expense of any election.

Training

Training is provided to all voting centre staff primarily via online training courses. A series of modules make up 4 courses related to the type of voting centre staff are employed to work in.



The courses were developed by the NTEC in conjunction with the Department of Corporate and Digital Development, and are hosted on the NTG's community learning portal.



A module developed for staff working in election day voting centres and scrutiny centres, which provides information about vote counting processes, will also be available as a stand-alone module for public access. While this is mostly aimed at stakeholders like parties, candidates, scrutineers and the media, it is also available to the general public.

Face-to-face training is provided to voting centre managers, and all remote and urban voting staff in addition to the online training courses.

Staff delivering the remote education and engagement program, as well as all remote voting team staff, are provided four wheel drive and first aid training.

Health and safety management

The NTEC, through its election service design, will respond to any public health directions, but has continued to follow health and safety guidelines from the Department of Health. In relation to elections, this includes:

- regular cleaning of shared surfaces including voting screens
- pencils to be handed out and cleaned between each voter
- unwell voting centre staff to be sent home and replaced.

Masks and hand sanitiser will not be supplied in voting centres as they have been for recent past elections. Voters, voting staff, candidates, scrutineers and campaign workers are welcome to bring and use their own.

Fatigue management

The NTEC, as with all electoral commissions, is increasingly conscious about the need to reduce the risk of fatigue in its election workforce when delivering major elections within fixed statutory timelines. During voting and counting periods, particularly on election day/night, fatigue can impair functioning and increase safety risks.



The NTEC is developing a fatigue management policy that will be implemented at the 2024 Territory Election. The application of the policy may result in counts concluding at set times, or not commencing where it is unlikely a count can be completed before the set time to cease counts (on election day).

The NTEC acknowledges the importance of timely counting and publication of election results. To support the count process within the application of the fatigue management policy, additional resources will be allocated where required.

The NTEC's approach to fatigue management will be published on the NTEC website and will be communicated to stakeholders via the election newsletter.

eSafety

The NTEC is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its staff within the digital environment.

The NTEC is a signatory to a joint referral protocol with the eSafety Commissioner, an initiative championed by the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand. This protocol is a coordinated effort among federal, state, and territory electoral commissions in Australia to protect election workers from online abuse during elections

The protocol establishes a process for electoral commissions to request assistance from the eSafety Commissioner in cases where election staff are targeted by online threats. This includes incidents of adult cyber abuse and the distribution of illegal or restricted content.

NTEC election staff will receive information on eSafety and the application of the protocol during the election.

VENUES

AND MATERIALS

Voting centres

The NTEC aims to have voting centres in locations convenient to voters. Early voting centres are usually located in shopping centres, election day voting centres in schools or community halls, and remote voting centres in central locations as advised by the community.

For the 2024 Territory Election, all voting centres will carry ballot papers for all 25 divisions. This means Territorians can vote at any voting centre. There will be:

- 12 early voting centres (although one is only open for one day of early voting)
- 31 election day voting centres
- 16 remote voting teams providing voting services at 171 remote voting stops
- 3 urban mobile voting teams (Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine) providing voting services at 9 stops.

The voting centres are listed in the voting services section of this Service Plan.

Early, election day and remote voting centres are secured through hire and license agreements.



For the first time at a Territory general election, all 12 early voting centres will become election day voting centres at the same location. This is to provide consistent voting services to Territorians.



Also for the first time, there will be an additional early voting option at Parap Primary School on Saturday 17 August from 8:00am – 3:00pm. This is aimed at reducing queues at the Parap election day voting centre.

Election offices and scrutiny centres

The NTEC's Darwin office will be the main election office for the 2024 Territory Election and from mid-July to mid-September 2024 a staffed election office will also be open in Alice Springs. The locations of the offices are:

- **Darwin:** Level 3, TCG Centre, 80 Mitchell Street
- **Alice Springs:** First floor, Alice Plaza.

There will also be 2 scrutiny centres for the election for the duration of the count period, one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs. The Alice Springs scrutiny centre will coordinate and conduct the counts for the 5 Central Australian divisions: Araluen, Barkly, Braitling, Gwoja and Namatjira. The remaining 20 divisions will be counted in Darwin. The locations of the scrutiny centres are:

- **Darwin:** 11 Osgood Drive, Eaton (former Flip Out site)
- **Alice Springs:** First floor, Alice Plaza.

Materials

Election materials are delivered to early voting centres and election day voting centres the day before voting opens. This equipment includes voting screens, ballot boxes, recycling bins, signage and additional furniture where required.

The NTEC has not had to purchase any new cardboard materials for the 2024 Territory Election but has procured secure satchels and seals for the transport of live election materials, and first aid supplies to equip every early, election day and mobile voting centre.

Electronic mark-off devices

Electronic mark-off devices are used at all voting centres and are able to work offline when required. This allows for voters to be marked off an electronic certified list as they are issued with a ballot paper. The mark-off system also assists with preventing multiple voting and provides live voter turnout statistics.

The Electoral Commission South Australia is loaning approximately 400 laptop devices to the NTEC to support the electronic mark-off of voters.

Ballot papers

Ordinary ballot papers are issued to all enrolled voters who vote at a voting centre including absent and early absent voters.

Declaration ballot papers are issued to postal voters, voters who cannot be found on the NT electoral roll or voters who have been marked as having already voted, but state they have not yet voted.

Ballot papers are printed immediately after the declaration of nominations once the candidate order on each ballot paper has been determined.



For the first time the NTEC is printing ballot papers with a coloured strip across the top of the ballot paper specific to each electoral division.

This is to easily identify which ballot papers belong to which division and should assist voters placing their ballot paper in the correct ballot box leading to more efficient sorting of misplaced ballot papers, as well as create efficiencies during scrutiny processes.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Communications campaign

The communications campaign will focus on 3 calls to action to voters throughout the election process:

1. **Check your enrolment** – mid-May to late July

- Encourage voters to check their enrolment status, update their details if necessary, and ensure they are eligible to vote.

2. **Educate and empower** – late June to late August

- Empower voters to take action.
- Educate voters about the election, voting options and the election process.
- Emphasise the importance of voters to evaluate the information they encounter and check the facts.
- Encourage voters to share this knowledge and empower their friends and family.
- Encourage community organisations to share information with their audiences.

3. **Vote** – early to late August

- Motivate voters to exercise their democratic right by participating in the election and voting.

Across the Territory the NTEC will run a multichannel campaign through TV, radio, digital/ social media, signage, letter box drop and print media to raise awareness about the election and the above calls to action. The campaign will also include:

- attendance at local events and stalls in community locations to discuss and promote the election
- collaboration with community leaders and local influencers to encourage participation
- a dedicated 2024 Territory Election webpage on the NTEC website with clear and accessible information on enrolment, voting locations, and key election dates
- a service centre for enquiries and support.

The communications campaign will also include targeted campaigns for key groups of voters.

Communications for remote communities

- Provide culturally appropriate materials to address the needs of remote voters.
- Provide educational materials in plain English, local languages and in video format.
- Deliver a multichannel communications campaign using local remote and Indigenous media organisations.
- Work with Local Authorities and key stakeholders promote the election within their communities.
- Train NTEC casual staff in cultural awareness to support engagement in remote communities.

Communications for youth

- Deliver a targeted social media campaign with relatable content to engage young voters.
- Provide educational materials in plain English and in video format.
- Collaborate with senior schools and universities to distribute communications to educate young voters.
- Encourage user-generated content and hashtags to promote participation.
- Collaborate with young leaders and influencers to encourage participation.

Communications for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities



- Develop educational materials in plain English and commonly spoken languages in the NT, and make available in every voting centre and on the NTEC website.
- Collaborate with CALD organisations and programs to distribute communications to CALD voters.

Communications for voters with a disability and the elderly

- Promote voting centres that are accessible to voters with a disability.
- Promote assisted voting services and postal voting to support participation.
- Collaborate with disability and elderly organisations and programs to distribute communications to disabled and elderly voters.

Media

The media is a critical stakeholder in the 2024 Territory Election not only to ensure transparency and integrity in election processes, but also in promoting the election and key election dates.

The NTEC will work closely with the media during the preparation, voting and counting periods of the election and aim to maintain a transparent and cooperative relationship with the media ensuring they have the information needed to inform the public accurately about the election. This will include:

- media briefings and press conferences to provide updates on election preparations, key milestones, and important announcements
- timely media releases containing essential information about the 2024 Territory Election
- access to the Electoral Commissioner and Deputy Electoral Commissioner for interviews and expert commentary on the election
- background briefings to journalists to enhance their understanding of electoral processes
- prompt responses to any inaccuracies or concerns in media coverage
- a media resource centre on the NTEC website, offering downloadable materials, images, and videos for use
- provision of election results via an FTP data file to support timely communications and broadcasting on election night.

ENROLMENT

Changes to electoral boundaries

The resulting boundaries of the 2023 NT Electoral Boundary Redistribution were gazetted on 15 December 2023 with the new boundaries coming into effect with the issue of the writ for the 2024 Territory Election on 1 August. Changes were made to the boundaries of 18 of the Territory's 25 divisions.

The NT's electoral roll has already been updated to reflect the new boundaries to assist voter awareness of which division they will be enrolled in for the election, as has the 'find my electorate' tool on the NTEC website.

Table 1 summarises the outcomes of the 2023 NT Electoral Boundary Redistribution for each division.

Table 1: 2023 NT Electoral Boundary Redistribution – summary of changes by division

Division	2023 NT Electoral Boundary Redistribution – summary of changes
Arafura	Vernon Islands moved to Arafura from Nelson (no electors impacted)
Araluen	No changes
Arnhem	Section of East Arnhem Land south of Central Arnhem Rd and north of Blue Mud Bay moved to Arnhem from Mulka.
Barkly	No changes
Blain	Moulden and Archer moved to Blain, Rosebery section moved out to Brennan
Braitling	No changes
Brennan	Southern part of Zuccoli, Mitchell and rest of Rosebery moved to Brennan (all of Rosebery now in Brennan), Gunn and Farrar moved out to Drysdale and Spillett
Casuarina	Further sections of Muirhead moved to Casuarina and section of Alawa moved out to Johnston (all of Alawa now in Johnston)
Daly	Timber Creek, its homelands and some surrounding pastoral properties moved out to Gwoja
Drysdale	Gunn moved to Drysdale from Brennan, and Moulden moved out to Blain
Fannie Bay	Sections of Coconut Grove moved to Fannie Bay from Nightcliff and Johnston

Fong Lim	Northcrest, some industrial parts of Berrimah, East Arm, Hidden Valley and Wishart moved to Fong Lim from Spillett
Goyder	No changes
Gwoja	Timber Creek, its homelands and surrounding stations moved to Gwoja from Daly
Johnston	Section of Alawa moved to Johnston from Casuarina (all of Alawa now in Johnston) sections of Coconut Grove moved out to Nightcliff and Fannie Bay
Karama	Knuckey Lagoon and Holmes moved to Karama from Nelson and Wanguri, sections of Berrimah and Marrara moved out to Sanderson
Katherine	No changes
Mulka	Section of East Arnhem Land south of Central Arnhem Rd and north of Blue Mud Bay moved out to Arnhem
Namatjira	No changes
Nelson	Marlow Lagoon, Pinelands, Tivendale and Elrundie moved to Nelson from Spillett, Knuckey Lagoon and Vernon Islands moved out to Karama and Arafura
Nightcliff	Section of Coconut Grove moved to Nightcliff from Johnston and southern section of Coconut Grove moved out to Fannie Bay
Port Darwin	No changes
Sanderson	Sections of Berrimah and Marrara moved to Sanderson from Karama
Spillett	Farrar moved to Spillett from Brennan, southern section of Zuccoli, Mitchell, Archer, Marlow Lagoon, Pinelands, Tivendale, Elrundie, Wishart, East Arm, Hidden Valley, Northcrest and sections of Berrimah moved out of Spillett to multiple divisions
Wanguri	Further section of Muirhead and all of Holmes moved out of Wanguri to Casuarina and Karama

The remote engagement and education program (more information about this program is found later in this section) being conducted in remote communities in the lead up to the election will communicate the redistribution outcomes where relevant, and what this means for voters. This is particularly for impacted communities in Arnhem, Daly, Gwoja and Mulka.

All households in urban areas will receive information via a letterbox drop to inform their household that their division may have changed. Households will be encouraged to check what division they are in using the 'find my electorate' search tool on the NTEC website.

Joint roll arrangement

The NT electoral roll is managed by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) under a joint roll arrangement between the Governor-General and the NT Administrator. Under this arrangement the AEC is responsible for:

- processing enrolments and deletions, and managing the geographic and electoral boundary information that underpins the electoral roll
- maintaining the quality of the roll by undertaking enrolment stimulation activities and reviewing the accuracy of voter and address information
- removing voters from the roll, if necessary, where there is evidence that they are no longer residing at their enrolled address.

The NTEC assists voters to follow the appropriate processes to enrol or update their enrolment details with the AEC, including performing its own enrolment stimulation activities.

FDEU – Federal direct enrolment update

Part of the joint roll arrangement involves the AEC running its FDEU program in the Northern Territory. The FDEU and the AEC's online enrolment service are now the top 2 sources of enrolment nationally and in the NT.

The FDEU uses data from trusted third parties (like Services Australia and the Australian Tax Office) to identify voters who have moved or need to be enrolled. Until 2022, the FDEU program required mail delivery to a street address which meant it did not operate in most rural and remote areas of the NT. Following a successful trial in late 2022, the AEC expanded its FDEU program in April 2023 to include community mail bags and email addresses so it now captures more voters in rural and remote areas.

This expansion, coupled with significant enrolment activities particularly in remote areas in the lead up to the Voice referendum in October 2023, had a positive impact on the NT's enrolment rate. The NT's enrolment rate is approximately 92% (the highest it has ever been) with 154,298 voters enrolled and an estimated 11,000 eligible voters not on the roll (as at 1 May 2024).

Enrolment by division

While the electoral boundary changes from the 2023 NT Electoral Boundary Redistribution do not come into effect until the issue of the writ for the 2024 Territory Election on 1 August, they were applied to the NT electoral roll on 23 April 2024 in preparation for the election.

Table 2 shows enrolment figures by division, following the application of the new boundaries, as at 1 May 2024.

Table 2: NT Enrolment by division as at 1 May 2024

Division	Enrolled electors
Arafura	6,270
Araluen	6,001
Arnhem	6,749
Barkly	6,238
Blain	6,438
Braitling	6,097
Brennan	6,189
Casuarina	5,853
Daly	6,246
Drysdale	6,353
Fannie Bay	6,139
Fong Lim	5,697
Goyder	6,288
Gwoja	6,284
Johnston	5,744
Karama	5,977
Katherine	6,239
Mulka	6,933
Namatjira	6,595
Nelson	6,441
Nightcliff	5,990
Port Darwin	5,797
Sanderson	5,957
Spillett	6,145
Wanguri	5,638
Total	154,298

Enrolment stimulation activities

The communications plan for the 2024 Territory Election will be delivered in 3 phases, with the first phase being election awareness and enrolment.

The following activities will be undertaken to promote election awareness and enrolment in the lead up to the election:

- a comprehensive advertising campaign across digital and traditional media platforms
- attendance at events, exhibitions and shopping centres
- direct communications to electors through SMS, email and letterbox drop
- stakeholder engagement to encourage distribution of promotion material.

Remote enrolment and education campaign

Starting in April 2024, a remote engagement and education program is being delivered by the NTEC to 71 remote communities across the Territory. There are 3 teams delivering the program, 2 in the Top End and Katherine regions, and one for Central Australia. The program will run until 9 August. The remote engagement and education program aims to:

- increase general knowledge of democratic and electoral process amongst remote voters
- promote awareness of 2024 Territory Election including voting dates and times
- facilitate enrolment and improve the accuracy of the NT electoral roll
- inform electors impacted by electoral boundary changes
- consult with communities to improve the delivery of remote voting services, including suitable locations for voting centres
- recruit local assistants for the voting period
- update community contact details (to receive election information).

Declaration voting



Amendments to the *Electoral Act 2004* in 2019 created a savings provision that allows eligible voters who are not enrolled in the NT at the close of electoral roll date for an election, a chance for their vote to be counted at that election.

Unenrolled voters can cast a declaration vote which involves providing enrolment details on a declaration vote envelope. All declaration envelopes are sent to the AEC for processing immediately after election day. Where the entitlement to vote is confirmed, and the voter is enrolled, their vote is admitted to the count. Where voters are unable to be enrolled, or are found to be already enrolled in a different division, their declaration vote is rejected and not admitted to the count.

This provisional voting for unenrolled voters was mostly aimed at addressing the inadequate enrolment of eligible voters in remote areas of the NT who, at the time, were not captured by the FDEU program. The number of declaration votes issued is likely to reduce due to the improved numbers of enrolled voters.

CANDIDATES AND PARTIES

Candidate information sessions

The NTEC will hold information sessions to provide prospective candidates with information about the nomination process, campaigning and authorisation requirements, financial disclosure obligations and details about the count process and results.

The candidate information sessions will be held in:

- **Alice Springs:** 11am – 12pm, 4 July, Andy McNeill Room (Alice Springs Town Council)
- **Darwin:** 1 – 2pm, 10 July, CDU Waterfront Theatre Auditorium (Room 5.03)

The Darwin candidate information session will be live streamed and recorded.

Nominations

The nomination dates for the 2024 Territory Election are:

- nominations open Thursday 1 August
- nomination close 12 noon, Thursday 8 August.

Qualification to nominate

To qualify for nomination, the person must:

- be an Australian citizen
- be 18 years or older
- be entitled, or qualified to become entitled, to vote for members of the Legislative Assembly
- have resided in the Commonwealth for at least 6 months and in the NT for at least 3 months
- not hold an office or appointment (other than a prescribed office or appointment) under a law of the Commonwealth, a State or Territory
- not be employed by the Commonwealth, a State or Territory or by a body corporate established for a public purpose by such a law

- not be entitled to any remuneration or allowance (other than reimbursement of reasonable expenses) in respect of that office, appointment or employment
- not have an undischarged bankruptcy
- not have been convicted and serving one or more year's term of imprisonment for an offence against the law of the Commonwealth, a State or Territory.

Nomination forms

There are 2 nomination forms available:

- **Endorsed candidate form** – for candidates who are endorsed by a political party. Each party only needs to submit one endorsed candidate nomination form as it provides for an endorsed candidate for every division. Candidates do not need to submit a separate form.
- **Independent candidate form** – for candidates not endorsed by a political party. Independent candidates need to include the name and signature of 6 nominators who must be entitled to vote at the election in the division the candidate is nominating for.

Both forms are available on the NTEC website.

Nomination forms must be accompanied by a photograph no more than 6 months old of the candidate and a \$500 nomination deposit. This deposit is returned to elected candidates and those candidates who receive more than 20% of the total number of first preference votes cast for the elected candidate.

Certain prescribed changes can be made to nomination forms, and nominations can be withdrawn, provided written notice of such is made prior to the close of nominations.

Declaration of nominations

The declaration of nominations is a public event held soon after the close of nominations. Nominations close at 12 noon, Thursday 8 August 2024, and the declaration of nominations will be held at approximately 1:00pm that day. The event will be officially notified by Gazette closer to the date.

There will be a declaration of nominations event in Alice Springs for the 5 Central Australian divisions, and a separate event in Darwin for the remaining 20 divisions.

The declaration of nominations includes the draw for ballot paper positions for each division. This is performed using a device which randomly generates a number for each candidate in a division, one at a time, which becomes their position on the ballot paper. The initial list of candidates is the order in which the NTEC received the nominations for that division.

Campaigning

There are specific requirements for registered political parties and candidates relating to election advertising and electoral matter. Candidates must ensure they are aware of all regulations relating to:

- election or campaign material
- the broadcast and publication of election or campaign material
- the authorisation of election or campaign material
- the display of election signage
- campaigning activities near voting centres.

Campaign material

Election or campaign material (referred to as 'electoral matter' in the *Electoral Act 2004*) includes any advertisement or document intended to promote the electoral prospects of candidates for an election including:

- an electoral advertisement
- a printed document such as a handout, pamphlet, how-to-vote card, poster or sign
- a message containing electoral matter sent by telephone or broadcast by electronic means
- published materials containing electoral matter
- car stickers or decals.

Authorisation of campaign material

The authorisation of campaign material, both printed and digital, means it must clearly state, in sufficient size:

- the name and address (street name and suburb, street number is not required) of the person authorising its publication or distribution (a PO box is not sufficient)
- if printed, the name and address of the printer
- if the material is double sided, the above authorisations must appear on both sides
- the source of funding for the material (candidate, party, associated entity, third party campaigner).

Election signage

While the display of election signage is not covered in the *Electoral Act 2004*, parties, candidates and campaign workers must check the election signage guidelines of the local government area they wish to display signage in and/or the signage policy of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics in regards to road reserves.

Most of the guidelines and policies about the display of election signage are similar across jurisdictions and include rules about the permitted timings, size, location and positions, and installation materials. The NTEC website provides links to the current guidelines and policies.

Canvassing of votes at voting centres

Canvassing for votes is not permitted within 10 metres of the entrance to an early voting centre or a remote voting location, or within 100 metres of an election day voting centre.

Canvassing of votes includes:

- placement or display of handouts and posters
- distributing pamphlets, how-to-vote cards and other campaign material
- soliciting the vote of a person
- inducing a person to not vote for a particular candidate
- inducing a person not to vote at an election
- using a loud speaker, public address system, amplifier or similar to broadcast election matter that is audible within the prohibition zone of a voting centre.

Designated campaign areas

A designated campaign area (DCA) **may** be set up within the 100 metre prohibition zone of an election day voting centre if an appropriate location has been identified by the NTEC. This is determined by the legislated requirements and work, health and safety considerations.

Up to 3 campaign workers for each candidate (contesting a division allocated to that voting centre), including the candidate themselves, can canvass for votes within the DCA. Only voters who approach the DCA can be engaged.



A DCA must be both accessible to voters and avoidable by voters who do not wish to engage with campaigners.

All campaign workers within the DCA must complete a DCA appointment form signed by their candidate and submit it to the voting centre manager before commencing.

DCAs and their locations will be advised on the NTEC website in the lead up to election day.

Campaigning resources

A candidate handbook, fact sheets, related forms and links to further resources are all available on the NTEC website.

Scrutineers

Scrutineers play an important role in ensuring transparency and integrity in elections.

Scrutineers are appointed by candidates to observe voting in voting centres and the counting of votes in scrutiny centres on behalf of their candidate. All scrutineers must provide a scrutineer appointment form signed by their candidate before commencing their duties in a voting centre or scrutiny centre.

Scrutineers often:

- witness the sealing and unsealing of ballot boxes
- provide assistance to voters who need help to cast their vote when requested by a voter
- witness assistance being provided by a voting centre manager to voters who need help to cast their vote
- object to the formality and placement of ballot papers during a vote count.

Scrutineers cannot:

- interfere with voters voting, or voting staff issuing votes, or the counting of votes
- handle ballot papers in any way
- photograph or film while in a voting centre or scrutiny centre, but are permitted to take a photo of a count results slip once advised by the table manager or count supervisor.

Scrutineer resources



The scrutineer appointment form and a scrutineer handbook are available on the NTEC website. A scrutineer information session will be held prior to election day on Thursday 15 August from 5:30pm. Details will be provided on the NTEC website.

An online training module for counting votes is also available to scrutineers; please contact the NTEC for instructions on how to access this training.

FUNDING

AND DISCLOSURE

Who has reporting obligations?

Under the financial disclosure scheme introduced prior to the 2020 Territory Election, the following electoral participants have financial disclosure obligations for the 2024 Territory Election:

- political parties
- associated entities
- candidates
- third party campaigners
- donors (of a total of \$1,500 or more to a candidate or party during the 2023-24 or 2024-25 financial years).

Gifts (donations)

Gifts can be monetary or non-monetary (gifts-in-kind) and include cash, services or expertise donations.

Only gifts of more than \$200 to individual candidates or gifts of more than \$1,500 to a party, associated entity or third party campaigner are required to be disclosed.

Table 3 provides details of the gift returns required from registered parties, associated entities, third party campaigners and non-party candidates.

Table 3: Gift returns required for 2024 Territory Elections

Return	Disclosure period	Due date
Return 1: 6 month return	1 July 2023 – 31 December 2023	30 January 2024
Return 2: quarterly return 1	1 January 2024 – 31 March 2024	10 April 2024
Return 3: quarterly return 2	1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024	10 July 2024
Return 4: return prior to early voting	1 July 2024 – 1 August 2024	6 August 2024
Return 5: return prior to election day	2 August 2024 – 19 August 2024	21 August 2024
Return 6: post-election return	20 August 2024 – 23 September 2024	3 October 2024

Additionally, an annual gift return for the 2023-24 financial year is due on 30 July 2024 for political parties (who are required to report on behalf of all of their endorsed candidates), non-party candidates and associated entities.

Each of the above gift returns require the following details:

- the total amount of gifts received during the relevant period
- the number of persons/entities who made gifts
- the details (name and address) of donors who donated over the threshold amount.

If there were no gifts above the reportable threshold received in the disclosure period, a nil return is still required to be submitted.

Each of the required returns will be published on the NTEC website.

Electoral expenditure

There is a cap on electoral expenditure of \$45,600 per candidate. This can be pooled by parties who endorse multiple candidates to a maximum total of \$1.14 million for those parties contesting all 25 seats.

An expenditure return covering all electoral expenditure incurred from 1 January 2024 – 23 September 2024 is due 60 days after election day (23 October 2024). For endorsed candidates whose expenditure is included in the pooled cap of their party (and associated entities) only one expenditure return by the party is required.

If no expenditure was incurred, a nil return is still required to be submitted.

An annual (expenditure) return is required for registered parties and associated entities. For the 2023-24 financial year, the annual expenditure return is due on 29 August 2024.

Territory campaign account

All donations and electoral expenditure in relation to the 2024 Territory Election must be processed through a dedicated Territory campaign account. Parties contesting multiple seats in the election must keep one account to cover the party and all of its endorsed candidates. This is to easily determine and audit donations received and the electoral expenditure incurred.

Donors

A person who has donated more than \$1,500 of gifts to a candidate or registered party in a financial year must submit an annual return within 60 days of the end of that financial year.

Financial disclosure resources

Handbooks, fact sheets, return forms, and disclosure periods can be found on the NTEC website.



The NTEC Financial Disclosure and Compliance Manager can be contacted at disclosure.ntec@nt.gov.au or on 8999 7618.

Compliance review

An independent compliance review will be conducted after the election to verify whether candidates, parties, associated entities and third party campaigners met their disclosure obligations.

The compliance report will be published on the NTEC website, and its findings will be included in the 2024 Territory Election Report.

VOTING

SERVICES

Postal voting

Any enrolled Territory voter can apply for a postal vote.

For Territory general elections, postal vote applications are open from 1 January in the year of the election. Applications can be made via an online form on the [NTEC website](#).



Postal vote application forms now include the requirement to provide details of any person applying for a postal vote on behalf of someone else, for transparency purposes.

The deadlines for postal vote applications for the 2024 Territory Election are:

- 5:00pm, Tuesday 20 August for overseas postal addresses
- 5:00pm, Thursday 22 August for Australian postal addresses

Voters already registered as a general postal voter with the AEC do not need to apply for a postal vote for the 2024 Territory Election, as your postal vote will automatically be processed for this election. Voters who would like to become a general postal voter (i.e. automatically sent a postal vote for any election the voter is eligible to vote in) need to complete an online general postal voter application form, via the [AEC website](#).

Postal votes for the 2024 Territory Election must be completed by the voter by 6:00pm on election day, Saturday 24 August 2024.

Completed postal votes must be returned to the NTEC by 12 noon on the second Friday after election day, Friday 6 September 2024.

A returned postal vote will only be accepted if the certificate on the back of the postal vote envelope has been signed, and therefore declared, by the voter.

Postal votes sent to overseas addresses are not guaranteed to arrive before the voting deadline, nor are they guaranteed to be returned to the NTEC by the deadline, due to current international postal conditions. If a postal vote to an overseas address is highly unlikely to make the timeframes, the voter will be advised by the NTEC and provided with a valid excuse for not voting in the election.

Early voting

Any Territory voter can vote early.

Early voting for the 2024 Territory Election will open Monday 12 August and close at 6:00pm on Friday 23 August.

The early voting centres listed in Table 3 are open for the full early voting period. These hours are:

Monday 12 August – Friday 16 August	8:00am – 5:00pm
Saturday 17 August	8:00am – 3:00pm
Monday 19 August – Thursday 22 August	8:00am – 5:00pm
Friday 23 August	8:00am – 6:00pm

Table 4: 2024 Territory Election - Early voting centres open for the full early voting period

Early voting centre	Location
Alice Springs	Shops 9-10, Alice Plaza (near food court area) – 36 Todd Mall
Casuarina	Casuarina Square (near Intersport) – 54 Bradshaw Terrace
Coolalinga	Coolalinga Central Shopping Centre – 425 Stuart Highway
Darwin City	Darwin Entertainment Centre – 93 Mitchell Street
Eaton	NTEC off-site premise (former Flip Out site) – 11 Osgood Drive
Katherine	Katherine Central Shopping Centre – Katherine Terrace
Nhulunbuy	Nhulunbuy Town Hall – 89 Chesterfield Circuit
Palmerston City	Palmerston Shopping Centre – 10 Temple Terrace
Tennant Creek	Barkly Regional Council Civic Hall, Peko Road
Yarrawonga	Gateway Shopping Centre (Pavilions) – 1 Roystonea Avenue

Table 4 provides details for those early voting centres with reduced opening times during the early voting period.

Table 5: 2024 Territory Election - Early voting centres with reduced opening times

Early voting centre	Dates open	Times open
Berry Springs Berry Springs Shopping Village – 10 Doris Rd	Saturday 17 August	8:00am – 3:00pm
	Monday 19 August – Thursday 22 August	8:00am – 5:00pm
	Friday 23 August	8:00am – 6:00pm
Parap Parap Primary School – Urquhart St	Saturday 17 August	8:00am – 3:00pm

Remote voting

Electors in remote locations are visited by remote voting teams as they are likely to be more efficiently and appropriately serviced by a mobile team due to having limited or no access to early or election day voting centres, or postal voting services.

The remote voting schedule considers all communities where evidence indicates a voter population of 10 or more, previous voting trends and stakeholder feedback. The 2024 Territory Election will have remote voting services at 171 remote locations.

16 remote voting teams will provide mobile voting services in the Territory's remote divisions of Arafura, Arnhem, Barkly, Daly, Gwoja, Mulka and Namatjira from Monday 12 August through to Saturday 24 August.

The remote voting schedule will be available on the NTEC website from Friday 7 June 2024. Please note the schedule is subject to change following feedback from local stakeholders at any time in the lead up to the election, and can change during the voting period when circumstances inadvertently arise. The NTEC website will contain current voting information.

Table 6: 2024 Territory Election – Remote voting stops by division

Arafura	Arnhem	Barkly	Daly	Gwoja	Mulka	Namatjira
Bolkdjam	Alyangula	Ali Curung	Adelaide River	Amanbidji	Banthula	Amoonguna
Buluhkadaru	Angurugu	Alpurrurulam	Batchelor	Areyonga	Birany Birany	Atitjere
Cooinda	Balma	Alyuen	Belyuen	Bulla	Buthan	Engawala
Gochan Jiny-Jirra	Baniyala	Ampilatwatja	Bulgul	Daguragu	Dhalinybuy	Finke
Gunbalanya	Barunga	Arawerr	Daly River	Gilwi	Galiwin'ku	Irrerlirre
Jabiru	Beswick	Arlparra	Dundee Beach	Haasts Bluff	Garrthalala	Kintore
Ji-Bena	Bulman	Atheley	Emu Point	Hermannsburg	Gawa	Mt Eaglebeak
Ji-Malawa	Dhuruputjpi	Atneltyey	Kybrook Farm	Imanpa	Gove Hospital	Orritpa-Thurra
Ji-Marda	Donydji	Atnwengerrpe	Merrepen	Kalkarindji	Gunyangara	Santa Teresa
Kabulwarnamayo	Gan Gan	Barkly Work Camp	Nama	Kaltukatjara	Gururumuru	Titjikala
Kakadu NP HQ	Gapuwiyak	Borroloola	Naiyu	Kings Canyon	Gutjangan	Walkabout Bore
Kolorbidahdah	Jilkminggan	Camel Camp	Palumpa	Lajamanu	Mapuru	
Mala'la Aged care	Malkala	Canteen Ck	Peppimenarti	Laramba	Milingimbi	
Mamadawerre	Manyallaluk	Daly Waters	Pine Creek	Lingara	Ngangalala	
Manabadurma	Mataranka	Elliott	Sand Palms Roadhouse	Mbunghara	Ramingining	
Maningrida	Milyakburra	Imangara	Thamarrurr Aged Care	Menngen	Rorruwuy	

Arafura	Arnhem	Barkly	Daly	Gwoja	Mulka	Namatjira
Maningrida new sub	Minyerri	Indaringya	Wadeye	Mt Liebig	Wallaby Beach	
Manmoyi	Mulggan	Inkawenyerre	Woodycupaldiya	Mutitjulu	Yathalamarra	
Marrkolidjban	Ngukurr	Inkwelaye	Woolianna	Myatt	Yirrkala	
Milikapiti	Numbulwar	Irrultja	Wudapuli	Nyirripi		
Minjilang	Raymangirr	Iylentye		Papunya		
Mudginberri	Rittarangu	King Ash Bay		Pigeon Hole		
Pickataramoor	Rurrangala	Mara		Timber Creek		
Pirlangimpi	Umbakumba	Marlinja		Wallace Rockhole		
Warruwi	Wandawuy	Mulga Bore		Willowra		
Wurrumiyanga	Weemol	Mungkarta		Yarralin		
Yapilika Forestry		Munyalini		Yuelamu		
		Nturiya		Yuendumu		
		Pmara Jutunta		Yulara		
		Pungalindum				
		Robinson River				
		Soakage Bore				
		Tara				
		Tennant Ck Hospital				
		Ti Tree				
		Wandagula				
		Wauchope				
		Wilora				
		Wutungurra				

Urban voting

Urban voting teams will service Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine visiting the locations listed in Table 6 below. When visiting hospitals and correctional centres, the urban voting teams will provide voting services to patients and prisoners, as well as to staff and visitors at the venue at the time.

Table 7: 2024 Territory Election - Urban voting teams and locations to be visited

Urban voting team	Locations
Alice Springs	Alice Springs Hospital, Alice Springs Correctional Centre
Darwin	Darwin Correctional Centre, Darwin Private Hospital, Royal Darwin Hospital, Palmerston Hospital
Katherine	Binjari, Katherine Hospital, Rockhole

Similar institutions located in more remote areas are part of the remote voting schedule including: Barkly Work Camp, Datjala Work Camp, Gove Hospital, Mala'la Aged Care (Maningrida), Tennant Creek Hospital and Thamarurr Aged Care (Wadeye).

The NTEC has contacted all aged care centres, retirement villages and independent living centres in urban and regional centres to arrange postal votes for their residents.

Election day voting

Election day is Saturday 24 August 2024. There will be 31 election day voting centres all of which will be open from 8:00am to 6:00pm.

Table 7 lists the election day voting centres for the 2024 Territory Election and their locations. All early voting centres will become election day voting centres on election day for consistency for voters.

Table 8: 2024 Territory Election – Election day voting centres

Voting centre	Location
Alice Springs	Shops 9-10, Alice Plaza (near food court area) – 36 Todd Mall
Berrimah	Haileybury Rendall School – 6057 Berrimah Road
Berry Springs	Berry Springs Shopping Village – 10 Doris Road
Braitling	Braitling Primary School – 80 Head Street
Casuarina	Casuarina Square (near Intersport) – 54 Bradshaw Terrace
Coolalinga	Coolalinga Central Shopping Centre – 425 Stuart Highway
Darwin City	Darwin Entertainment Centre – 93 Mitchell Street
Eaton	NTEC off-site premise (former Flip Out site)– 11 Osgood Drive
Gillen	Gillen Primary School – 55 Milner Road
Howard Springs	Whitewood Hall – 310 Whitewood Road
Humpty Doo	Taminmin College – 70 Challoner Circuit
Ilparpa	Blatherskite Park – Len Kittle Drive
Karama	O'Loughlin Catholic College – 70 Mueller Road
Katherine	Katherine Central Shopping Centre – Katherine Terrace
Larapinta	Living Waters Lutheran Primary School – Albrecht Drive
Leanyer	Leanyer Primary School – 114 Leanyer Drive
Ludmilla	Ludmilla Primary School – 41 Bagot Road
Malak	Sanderson Middle School – 60 Matthews Rd
Moil	Moil Primary School – Moil Crescent
Nhulunbuy	Nhulunbuy Town Hall – 89 Chesterfield Circuit
Nightcliff	Nightcliff Middle School – 90 Aralia Street

Voting centre	Location
Palmerston City	Palmerston Shopping Centre – 10 Temple Terrace
Parap	Parap Primary School – Uquhart Street
Rosebery	Palmerston College 7-9 Campus – 185 Forrest Parade
Sadadeen	Centralian Senior College – 10 Grevillea Drive
Tennant Creek	Barkly Regional Council Civic Hall, Peko Road
Tindal	Tindal Community Hall, Easton Parade
Wagait Beach	Wagait Community Centre – 142 Wagait Tower Road
Woodroffe	Sacred Heart Primary School – 34 Emery Avenue
Yarrawonga	Gateway Shopping Centre (Pavilions) – 1 Roystonea Avenue
Zuccoli	Zuccoli Primary School, cnr Zuccoli Parade and Peaflower St



The NTEC website will include a ‘find my nearest voting centre’ tool.

Absent voting

Any Territory voter can cast an absent vote or an early absent vote.

An absent vote is a vote issued at an election day voting centre to a voter enrolled for a division not allocated to that voting centre.

An early absent vote is a vote issued at an early voting centre to a voter enrolled for a division that is outside the region of divisions allocated to the early voting centre.

Remote voting teams and urban voting teams will also be able to issue absent votes.

Absent votes are not counted on election night. Following election day, absent votes are exchanged so that all absent votes for the 5 Central Australia divisions are sent to the Alice Springs scrutiny centre, and absent votes for the remaining 20 divisions are sent to the Darwin scrutiny centre.

Absent votes will be counted on the first Friday after election day, 30 August 2024.

Declaration voting

A person who cannot be found on the electoral roll, but is entitled to vote, can be issued with a declaration vote after completing and signing a declaration envelope. The voter’s ballot paper is then placed in the envelope as it needs further scrutiny and processing. Once the entitlement to vote is confirmed, the ballot paper is admitted to the count.

Additionally, voters who are found to be already marked off as having voted, but state they have not yet voted, can also be issued with a declaration vote.

Interstate voting

Territory voters who are interstate during the voting period may be able to access interstate voting services. Interstate voting services will be available in every capital city at the state or territory electoral commission office for the duration of the early voting period from Wednesday 14 August to Friday 23 August. Voting hours will be the opening hours of each office.

Table 9: 2024 Territory Election – interstate voting services

Interstate voting centre	Location
Adelaide	Electoral Commission of South Australia – Level 6, 60 Light Square
Brisbane	Electoral Commission Queensland – Level 20 Eagle Street
Canberra	Elections ACT – Nara Centre, 3 Constitution Avenue
Hobart	Tasmanian Electoral Commission – Level 3, 169 Main Road, Moonah
Melbourne	Victorian Electoral Commission – Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Perth	Western Australian Electoral Commission – Level 2, 66 St Georges Tce
Sydney	New South Wales Electoral Commission – 231 Elizabeth Street

Territory voters who are interstate during the voting period, who are able to receive mail to a postal address, may apply for a postal vote.

Assisted voting

There are a number of ways assistance can be provided to voters who need it. Any voter may bring in a nominated person to provide the assistance they need in a voting centre. This is usually a family member or friend, or voters can ask for assistance from a scrutineer or the voting centre manager.

Physical assistance

- Lower voting screens – at table height are available in every voting centre for use by voters in a wheelchair, or who need to sit down while casting their vote.
- In car voting – is available to voters who may have mobility issues, or other concerns entering a voting centre. The voter may need someone to request voting assistance, and the voting centre manager can bring a ballot paper to the voter outside the voting centre.
- Writing assistance – can be provided to someone who is unable to hold a pen or pencil to mark their ballot paper.
- Magnifying tools – are provided in every voting centre.
- Disabled parking bays – are available in convenient locations at every early voting centre and election day voting centre.

In-language support

- Nominated persons – like a friend or family member can provide assistance to voters in any language.
- Multi-lingual guides – about voting in 11 languages are available as handouts in every voting centre and on the NTEC website.
- In-language videos – in 13 Aboriginal languages, Tagalog and easy English are available on every issuing device in all voting centres and on the NTEC website.
- Local assistants – are employed in remote communities where possible to provide information to voters in-language and interpret for the team leader when giving assistance direct to voters.

Voter community groups

There are a number of groups of voters that are considered their own community group as they may face barriers to participation and/or require extra support. The NTEC is contacting these communities via peak bodies or similar to provide awareness of the election, arrange specialised voting services (for example mobile voting or postal voting) or develop tailored resources and communications.

These groups of voters include:

- Aged care residents
- CALD communities
- Defence personnel – especially those deployed or on training exercises during the voting period
- FIFO workers at mines
- Pastoral station residents/workers via NT Cattlemen’s Association
- Prisoners via correctional centres and work camps
- Town camps residents
- Voters with a disability.

COUNTING

VOTES

Preferential voting

Legislative Assembly elections in the Northern Territory use the full preferential voting system which requires voters to place a preference against every candidate on the ballot paper.

To be elected using the full preferential system, a candidate must receive more than 50% of the total formal votes.

Formality

A ballot paper is formal (and therefore counted) if:

- the voter's first choice (or preference) is clear, and
- the first choice is indicated by a number one (1), a tick (✓) or a cross (x), and
- the first choice is followed by a sequential order of choices for each remaining candidate.

The general rule is: if the voter's intention is clear, the ballot paper should be counted.

However:

- one blank square, provided it is the voter's last choice, does not make the ballot paper informal
- corrections to numbers, numbers written outside the squares, drawings and messages do not make the ballot paper informal – provided it is otherwise marked correctly.

A ballot paper is informal if:

- it is totally blank
- there is no number one (1), a tick (✓) or a cross (x)
- it has a number one (1), a tick (✓) or a cross (x) against 2 or more names
- 2 or more squares have been left blank
- a number has been repeated
- writing on the ballot paper identifies the voter.

First preference count

The first stage of counting in a preferential election is called a first preference count.

Once a ballot paper has been deemed formal it is distributed to the candidate who received the voter's first preference.

A voter can indicate their first preference by writing a number one (1), a tick (✓) or a cross (x).

Two-candidate preferred count

A two-candidate preferred (TCP) count, (called an 'interim distribution of preferences' in the *Electoral Act 2004*), may be conducted for those divisions where more than 2 candidates are contesting the election. A TCP count is conducted immediately after a first preference count.

The NTEC selects the 2 candidates assumed most likely to be elected after a full distribution of preferences. This selection is based on a number of factors including historical voting patterns, and is kept confidential until the close of voting.

Ballot papers where the first preference went to an 'unselected' candidate are distributed according to the preferences for the 2 selected candidates only.

If the 2 candidates selected as preferred for the election day TCP counts are incorrect (i.e. not the candidates with the 2 highest first preference counts) a new TCP count will be done at the fresh scrutiny on the Monday after election day.

A TCP count is an *indicative count only*, to give an early indication of the possible outcome. It has no effect on the final results.

Initial count

Election day voting centres close at 6:00pm and become scrutiny centres for the ordinary votes issued at that voting centre. Some voting centres will do multiple first preference counts (for each division allocated to it) one at a time.

Most other votes are counted at a scrutiny centre in either Darwin or Alice Springs. After the close of voting at 6:00pm on election day, the following votes will be counted at a scrutiny centre:

- early votes issued at urban early voting centres
- ordinary votes issued by remote voting teams
- postal votes that have been returned before election day.

Candidates are able to have one scrutineer per count table at both election day voting centres and scrutiny centres that are counting votes cast for the division they are contesting.

Absent (including early absent) and declaration votes need further scrutiny and processing and are counted later in the 13 day count period.

Fresh scrutiny

On the Monday after election day, a fresh scrutiny (called a 'check count' in the *Electoral Act 2004*) will take place at the scrutiny centres in Darwin and Alice Springs. This is to check the initial counts and are essentially a repeat of the count conducted on election night.

At a fresh scrutiny:

- all ordinary ballot papers counted on election night are reviewed and counted again
- some ballot papers that were initially considered informal at the initial count may be deemed formal and distributed to a candidate
- conversely, ballot papers that were previously considered formal may be deemed informal and excluded from the count
- any misplaced ballot papers will be distributed to the correct candidate.

The fresh scrutiny may see minor changes to the results where corrections are made to the initial count results during the checking process.

Counting postal votes

Postal votes must be received by the NTEC by 12 noon on the second Friday after election day to be eligible to be admitted to the count. For the 2024 Territory Election this deadline is Friday 6 September 2024.

Postal votes received by election day are counted at the 2 scrutiny centres at the initial count. Further intakes of postal votes are counted with absent votes and admitted declaration votes during the 13 day count period.

The final intake of postal votes is counted after the final deadline has passed.

Most postal votes, returned before the deadline, are admitted to the count, however they are first scrutinised to check they pass certain criteria required to be admitted. The main reason returned postal votes are not admitted to a count (in order from most common to least common) are:

- the voter chose to vote in-person instead
- the postal vote certificate is not signed
- the postal vote was declared at a date and time after 6:00pm on election day
- the signature on the postal vote certificate does not match the signature on the postal vote application or the voter's enrolment form
- the voter was removed from the roll prior to the date they completed their postal vote
- the ballot paper was returned outside the postal vote certificate and envelope.

Counting absent votes

Absent votes are not counted on election night. Following election day, absent votes are exchanged so that all absent votes for the 5 Central Australia divisions are sent to the Alice Springs scrutiny centre, and absent votes for the remaining 20 divisions are sent to the Darwin scrutiny centre.

Absent votes will be counted on the first Friday after election day, 30 August 2024, with the second intake of postal votes.

Counting declaration votes

Declaration votes are first scrutinised to determine if they can be admitted to the count.

For declaration votes completed by voters that could not be found on the electoral roll, the declaration envelopes are scanned and sent to the Australian Electoral Commission for enrolment processing. Where the entitlement to vote is confirmed, the voter is added to the electoral roll, and their vote is admitted to the count. Where voters are unable to be enrolled, or they are found to be already on the Territory roll for another division, the declaration vote is rejected.

For voters who complete a declaration vote due to being already marked off as having voted, investigations are conducted via reports from the electronic mark-off system, the postal voting system, as well as reports from voting centres regarding connectivity issues, incorrect mark off or other related issues.

Admitted declaration votes will be counted on the first Friday after election day (if ready), 30 August 2024, or on the second Friday with the final intake of returned postal votes.

Distribution of preferences

The final stage of the count, which occurs on the second Friday after election day after all ballot papers have been accounted for, is a distribution of preferences if no candidate has received more than 50% of the total formal votes from first preferences.

To be elected, a candidate must receive more than 50% of the total formal votes for their division in the count (i.e., 50% + 1).

To begin the distribution of preferences, the candidate with the fewest formal votes is 'excluded.' Each ballot paper from the excluded candidate is then redistributed to the candidate next in line according to the voter's preferences.

This process of exclusions and preference distribution continues until one candidate achieves more than 50% of the formal votes, making them the elected candidate.

This distribution of preferences process means the elected candidate has the support of the majority of voters in the division.

Recounts

A recount may be undertaken, approved, or directed at any time before the election result is officially declared. It is important to note that a recount is distinct from the fresh scrutiny which is a check of votes counted on election night.

A recount request must identify specific ballot papers and significant counting errors or irregularities that could potentially change the election result within a division.

The Electoral Commissioner also has the authority to order a recount at their discretion. As a general rule, a recount would only be considered once almost all ballot papers have been admitted to the count (absent votes, declaration votes, and the second intake of postal votes), and, if across a whole division, a TCP count showed a likely margin of 100 votes or less. Therefore, a recount is only likely to be conducted late in the 13 day period.

Results

As soon as practicable after the results of any count are available, they will be made public on the NTEC website.

Election results will be distributed to media outlets to support the broader communication of election results.

Declaration of results

The NTEC makes a public declaration of election results on the Monday following the distribution of preferences.

NON-VOTER ACTIVITIES

Non-voters

After any election, voters who did not vote at a voting centre, apply for a postal vote or provide a valid and sufficient reason for not voting, are compiled into a list of non-voters.

Non-voters are issued an infringement notice to pay \$25, but are also given the opportunity to provide a 'valid and sufficient' reason for not voting, or provide details of where they did vote. Not knowing about an election is not considered a valid or sufficient reason.

Voting is compulsory

Voting at elections for all 3 levels of government (federal, territory and local) is compulsory in the Northern Territory.

Voters who know ahead of time that they will not be able to vote in person or access a postal vote are encouraged to contact the NTEC prior to election day to provide this reason.

Voters who are not likely to find out about elections through regular communication or advertising methods are encouraged to ensure a mobile phone number or email address is included in their enrolment details. The NTEC will advise every voter who provides these details about either the commencement of early voting near them, when a remote voting team is visiting their community or, if they have not yet voted, about election day voting centre locations.

Multiple voters

It is an offence for a voter to vote more than once at an election. Electronic voter mark-off advises voting staff immediately if a voter has already been marked off as having voted, this includes being issued with a postal vote.

However, there are a number of legitimate reasons where someone may be marked as having voted on different devices including where there is limited internet connectivity and devices are unable to synchronise regularly.

Post-election, data reports across all devices are generated to find apparent multiple voters which are then investigated by the NTEC.

