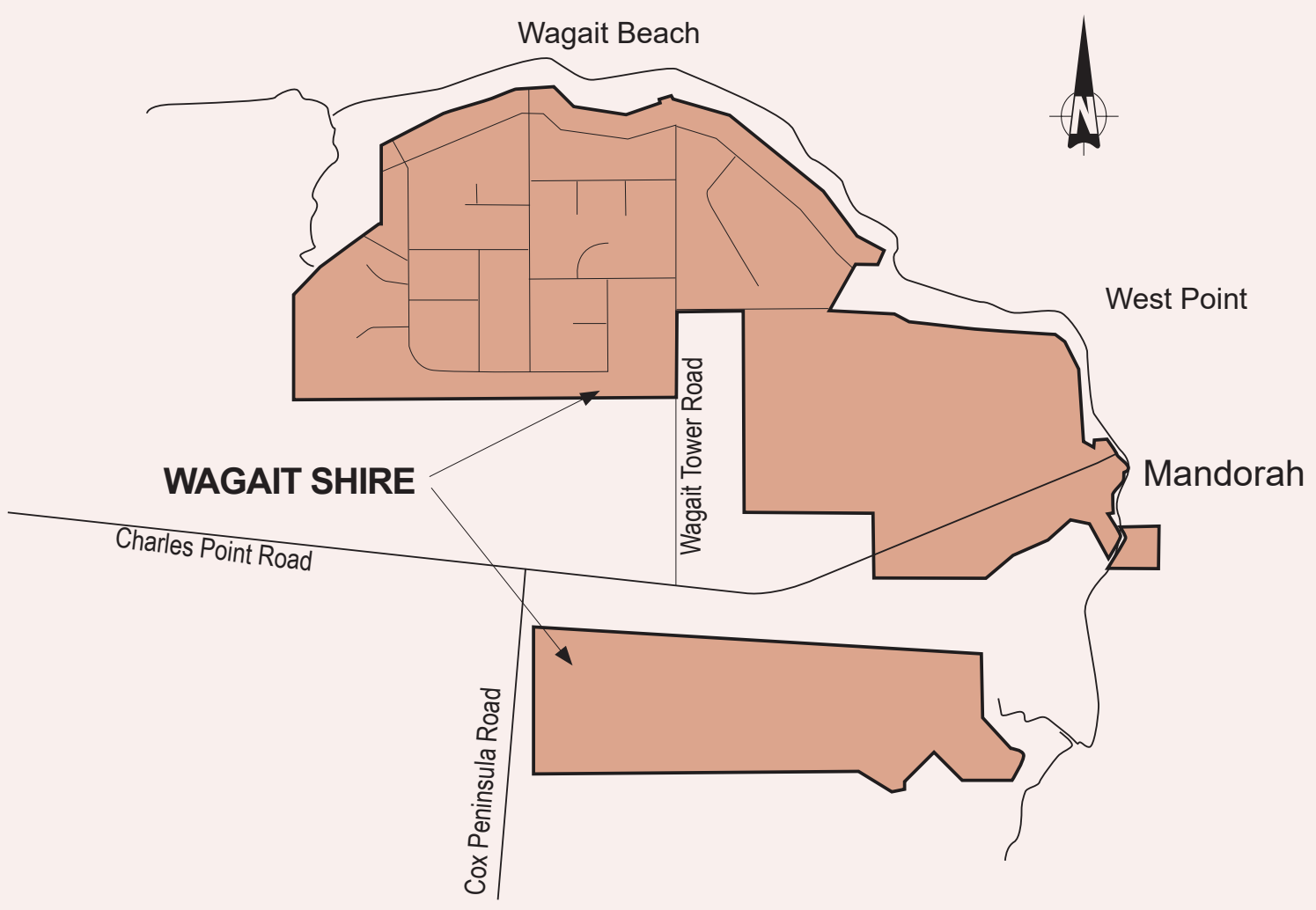




# 2018 WAGAIT SHIRE COUNCIL BY-ELECTION REPORT





## Timetable

Date	Time	
Friday 31 August		Nominations open
Tuesday 4 September	5:00 pm	Electoral roll closes
Thursday 6 September	12:00 noon	Nominations close
	1:00 pm	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Friday 7 September		Postal vote mail-out commences
	8:00 am	Early voting commences
Monday 10 September	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 18 September	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Thursday 20 September	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Friday 21 September	5:00 pm	Early voting ceases
<b>Saturday 22 September</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 24 September	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Thursday 27 September	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Friday 28 September	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
		Distribution of preferences
Monday 1 October	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Election**

- The by-election in Wagait Shire Council was caused by two vacancies due to the resignation of two councillors. The by-election was conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act Part 8.2*.
- Mr Mark Sidey, Chief Executive Officer of Wagait Shire advised the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) in writing of the resignations in accordance with *Section 39 (4) (d) (i) of the Local Government Act*.
- The Commissioner of the NTEC is the returning officer for local government elections, including by-elections.
- Susan Whyte was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the 2018 Wagait Shire Council by-election.
- An electronic mark-off system was used at all voting centres.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Wagait Shire Council and the NTEC was entered into on 16 July 2018. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and estimated costs.

### **Council**

Wagait Shire Council consists of five elected councillors.

As per the service level agreement, Wagait Shire Council undertook/provided the following for the by-election:

- Council owned premises for voting centres, at no cost
- A roll cleansing exercise
- Promotion of the election by displaying election posters within the shire; including, at the local store and the ferry terminal.
- A staff member to undertake early voting services at the council office for one week.

### **Boundary changes**

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

### **ENROLMENT**

An enrolment initiative, specific to Wagait Shire Council, included an electoral roll cleansing project that commenced on 13 August 2018 and concluded on 23 August 2018. The review identified 13 electors who no longer resided in the council area and one deceased elector. The results of this review were forwarded to the AEC for their necessary action.

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 4 September 2018, there was a total of 307 electors enrolled for Wagait Shire Council; a reduction of four electors from the 2017 NT Council elections.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

### **Website**

The Wagait Shire Council by-election website was launched on Monday, 27 August and provided comprehensive information for candidates and voters. It also hosted a dedicated election results page and included details on vote counting, and showed all voting centre information.

### **Advertising – newspaper**

Statutory print advertising, providing relevant election information, was published in the NT News.

### **Email and SMS**

On Wednesday 19 September, a total of 139 emails and 41 SMS messages were used to contact Wagait Shire Council electors. The email provided information on locations and voting hours for both early and election day voting centres. The SMS messages were sent to those electors who did not have an email address listed on their enrolment record; the SMS provided a simple message on the early voting centre (EVC) location and Saturday's voting centre.

### **Council**

Wagait Shire Council were proactive in informing electors of the upcoming election by distributing relevant information sheets and posters within the shire; including, at the Wagait store and the ferry terminal.

## **VOTING SERVICES**

### **Nominations**

Nominations opened Friday 31 August 2018 and closed on Thursday 6 September 2018 at 12:00 noon. There were a total of three accepted nominations received.

The declaration of nominations was conducted at the Darwin NTEC office on Thursday 6 September 2018 at 1:00 pm. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate.

### **Summary of accepted nominations/candidates for Wagait Shire Council**

<b>POSITION</b>	<b>CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER</b>
Wagait Shire- Councillor Two vacancies	Fiona WEBSTER
	Tom DYER
	Graham DRAKE

### **Electronic voter mark-off**

An electronic voter mark-off system was used for the by-election and records when someone has voted.

The voter mark-off system alleviates the necessity to have paper certified lists; therefore, improving efficiencies in voting centres.

### **Early voting**

Legislative changes in 2015 allows all electors the option to vote early without the need to meet any eligibility criteria. Early voting for this event was provided at the Wagait Council office, the NTEC Darwin office and MyVote Central office in Alice Springs. A total of 49 early votes were issued.

### Postal voting

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

There were five postal votes issued for Wagait Shire council with four accepted and admitted into the count.

### Election day voting centre

Election day was Saturday 22 September 2018. An election day voting centre was open at the Wagait community room with voting available from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm. A total of 148 votes were issued on election day.

The voting centre experienced an influx of electors which coincided with the departure and arrival of the ferry service, with the last ferry arriving at 5.15 pm and departing at 5.20 pm.

### Total votes issued compared to the general election in 2017

LOCATION	2018 by-election	2017 NT Council elections
Wagait election day voting centre	148	189
Early votes/absent/urban voting	49	34
Postal votes returned & admitted	4	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Turnout</b>	<b>65.5%</b>	<b>75.9%</b>

## ELECTION

### Voting

The electoral system used in NT Local Government (Council) elections is the Proportional Representation electoral system; or PR for short:

- 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, divided by the number of vacancies, plus one.
- The candidates with votes equal to or greater than the quota are elected. If all vacancies are filled, the election is complete.
- If some vacancies remain unfilled, 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 day

Immediately after the close of voting at 6.00pm on election day, there was a count of first preference votes taken at the Wagait early voting centre and then a first preference count for votes taken on the Saturday. These counts were conducted at the Wagait community office scrutiny centre.

### Post-election night scrutinies

All votes received for the Wagait Shire Council were entered into an electronic count system (Easy count) and then re-entered for verification purposes.

Easy count was used for the election as there were two vacancies for Councillor. By using this system it alleviates the need to undertake a fresh recheck of ballot papers from voting centres as each paper is entered and verified by two different data operators.

To be considered for the count, voters that applied for a postal vote were to complete their ballot papers and return them no later than 12:00 noon on Friday 28 September 2018. Four postal ballot papers were accepted and admitted to 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 page of the website mid-afternoon on 28 September 2018.

### Total number of first preference votes counted for each voting centre

Voting centre	Enrolment at 4 Sep 2018	Formal votes	Informal votes	Total
WAGAIT EVC		34	2	<b>36</b>
DARWIN EVC		13	0	<b>13</b>
WAGAIT EDVC		143	5	<b>148</b>
POSTAL		4	0	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>201</b>

### Election of two councillors – Wagait Shire Council

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

Candidate	First preferences
Fiona WEBSTER	25
Tom DYER	111
Graham DRAKE	58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>194</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 65.

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

Tom Dyer received the quota at count number one.

Graham Drake received the quota at count number two.

Tom Dyer and Graham Drake were duly elected.

### **Declaration of the results**

After the completion of a distribution of preferences, the election result and formal declaration documentation was sent to the CEO, Wagait Shire Council and the Minister for Housing and Community Development.

### **Election costs**

The estimated cost of the Wagait Shire Council by-election was \$4,860.19 (GST included). Final cost of the election was \$5,002.03 (GST included).

The variance of \$141.93 was attributed to NTEC staff overtime costs.

## **ISSUES OF NOTE**

### **Informal votes**

- It was pleasing to see a very low level of informal voting. A total of seven informal votes were received (3.5 percent of the total votes). Six of these votes were considered intentionally informal.

### **Wagait early voting centre**

- This is the first election that the Wagait Shire Council conducted early voting for a full week. In previous by-elections there has been an early voting centre operating for one day at Wagait. The increase of early votes taken at this election was attributed to the availability of the early voting centre at the Wagait Shire Council office.

### **Non-voters**

- Approximately 93 electors (30 percent) were identified as failing to vote in the 2018 Wagait Shire Council by-election. A further 12 electors (4 percent) provided valid and sufficient reasons prior to, and during, the election.
- If council wishes to pursue the apparent non-voters from this event, the NTEC can extend its services to undertake this project; and a detailed costing can be provided upon request.

The Commission would like to extend its thanks to Mark Sidey and Pam Wanrooy for the support provided.