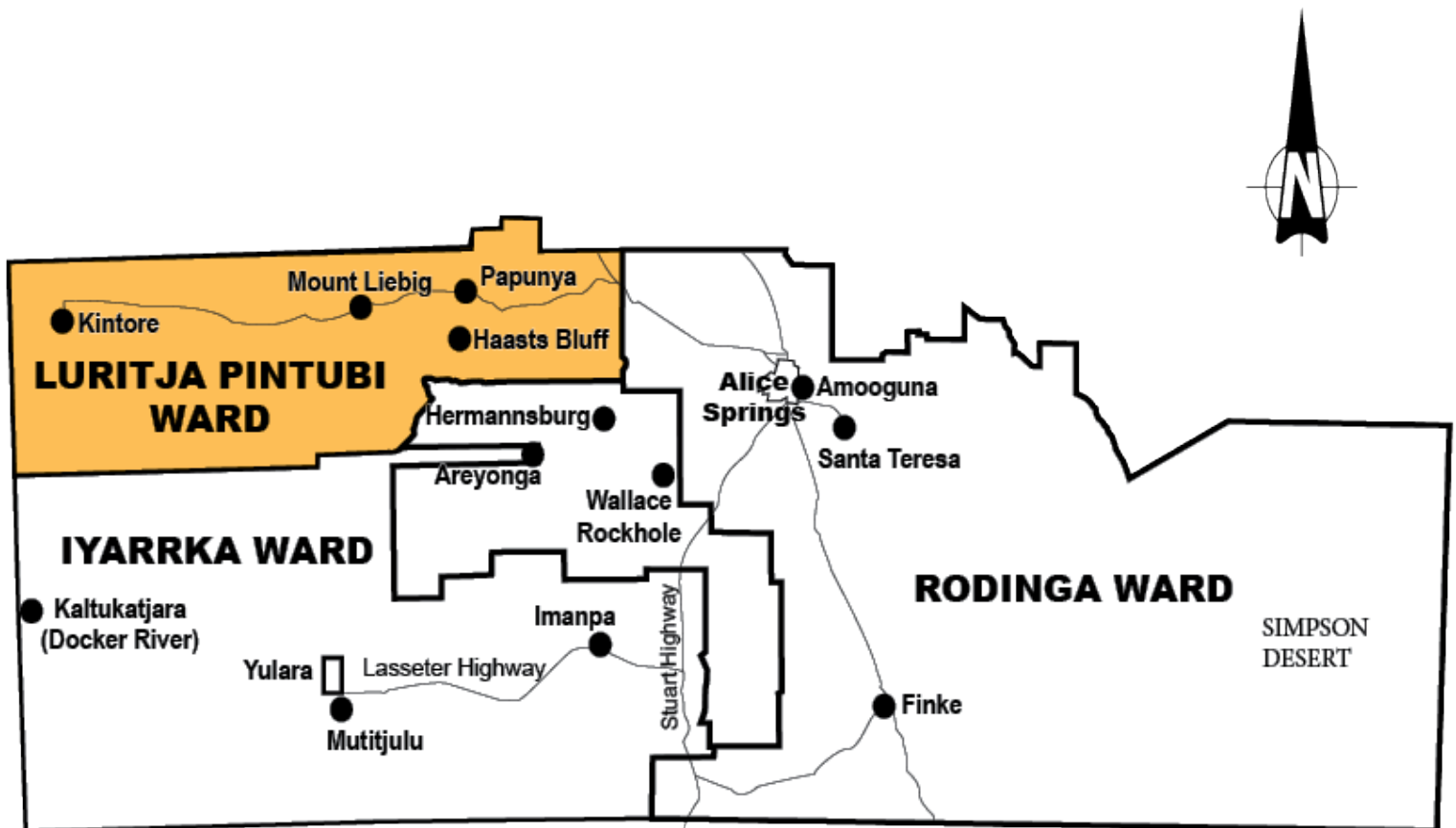




MACDONNELL REGIONAL COUNCIL BY-ELECTION REPORT 2017

LURITJA PINTUBI WARD





Election timetable

Luritja Pintubi by-election

1 December 2017

Date	Time	
Monday 6 November		Nominations open
Wednesday 15 November	5:00 pm	Electoral roll closes
Friday 17 November	12:00 noon	Nominations close
	1:00 pm	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Monday 20 November		Postal vote mail-out commences
Monday 27 November	8:00 am	Early voting commences
	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 28 November	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Wednesday 29 November	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Thursday 30 November	5:00 pm	Early voting ceases
Friday 1 December		Election day
	8:00 am	Election day voting commences
	1:00 pm	Election day voting ceases
		Mobile voting ceases
Monday 4 December	8:00 am	Primary counts of ordinary, postal and early votes commence
	10:00 am	Primary counts of postal, mobile and early votes commence
		Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Wednesday 6 December	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Thursday 7 December	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
		Distribution of preferences
Friday 8 December	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

INDEX

BACKGROUND	2
Election	2
Council	2
Boundary changes.....	2
ENROLMENT	2
PUBLIC AWARENESS	2
Website	2
Newsletter	2
Advertising – print, radio, television.....	3
Council	3
VOTING SERVICES.....	3
Nominations	3
Electronic voter mark-off	3
Early voting	3
Postal voting	3
Mobile voting	3
Election day voting centre.....	4
ELECTION	4
Voting	4
Voter participation.....	4
Post-election scrutinies	4
Election of one councillor – Luritja Pintubi Ward	5
Declaration of the results.....	5
Election costs.....	5
ISSUES OF NOTE.....	6
Training voting centre staff.....	6
Voter turnout.....	6
Informal votes	6
General	6

BACKGROUND

Election

- The by-election was caused by a vacancy due to the passing of a councillor who had been elected at the 2017 NT Council elections. The by-election was conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act Part 8.2*.
- The Commissioner of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is the returning officer for local government elections, including by-elections.
- Blake Hartman was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the MacDonnell Regional Council, Luritja Pintubi Ward by-election.
- Hard copy certified lists were used at all voting centres in place of the electronic certified lists used at the recent general election. This was a cost savings provision.

Council

A partnership between the NTEC and MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) was formed to address and improve the low voter turnout experienced at the recent NT Council elections in August.

It was agreed that the MacDonnell Regional Council would provide council premises and staff in the four major communities within the ward. The voting hours were extended, allowing more flexible options, with voting conducted from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Tuesday to Thursday and 8:00 am to 12:00 noon on the Friday.

MacDonnell Regional Council provided/undertook the following for the by-election:

- The use of council premises for voting services at the four larger communities within the ward.
- Promotion of the election through council website and council operated community service centres.
- Council staff to act as electoral officials for the duration of voting.

Boundary changes

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

ENROLMENT

Enrolment initiatives for by-election were minimal due to the roll cleansing project that was undertaken from March to June 2017 for the general election in August.

At the close of the electoral roll on Wednesday 15 November at 5:00 pm, there was a total of 968 electors enrolled for Luritja Pintubi Ward. This is an increase of 13 electors from the 2017 NT Council elections.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Website

The Luritja Pintubi Ward by-election website was launched on Monday 6 November and this provided comprehensive information for candidates and voters. It also hosted dedicated election results pages, included details on vote counting, and showed all voting centre information.

Newsletter

Election information relating to nominations, voting options and general election details were distributed via the MacDonnell Regional Council newsletter.

Advertising – print, radio, television

Statutory print advertising, providing relevant election information, was published in the Centralian Advocate.

Council

MacDonnell Regional Council also undertook the role of notifying electors of the upcoming election by distributing relevant information sheets and posters that promoted nominations and voting via their community service centres. They also encouraged recently-elected council members to promote the election internally.

VOTING SERVICES

Nominations

Nominations opened Monday 6 November and closed on Friday 17 November at 12:00 noon. There were a total of three nominations received for the by-election.

The declaration of nominations was conducted at the Alice Springs NTEC office on Friday 17 November at 1:00 pm. This event was attended by council representatives. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate.

Summary of accepted nominations/candidates for MacDonnell Regional Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Luritja Pintubi Ward Councillor (1 positions)	Audrey TURNER
	Giselle BARKU
	Dalton MCDONALD

Electronic voter mark-off

Hard copy certified lists were used in all four voting centres to mark eligible voters off the electoral roll. It was a financial decision not to utilise electronic certified lists for the by-election as a set-up fee applies.

Each voting centre was provided with one certified list which minimized the likelihood of multiple voting. A full NT electoral roll was supplied to each voting centre to assist identifying those enrolled outside the ward.

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 NTEC MyVote Central Office in Alice Springs with a total of four votes received before election day.

Postal voting

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

There were 24 postal votes issued for Luritja Pintubi Ward; however, nil were returned and/or admitted to the count.

Mobile voting

Mobile voting was conducted at the four major communities within the ward over a four day period. The issuing of votes was undertaken by duly appointed MacDonnell Regional Council Service Centre staff members.

Number of votes issued

LOCATION	VOTES				TOTAL
	Day 1 Tue 28 Nov	Day 2 Wed 29 Nov	Day 3 Thu 30 Nov	Day 4 Fri 1 Dec	
Haasts Bluff	32	8	4	0	44
Mt Liebig	49	22	5	4	80
Kintore	46	74	18	12	150
Papunya	27	50	24	10	111
TOTAL	154	154	51	26	385

The above total includes 15 declaration votes taken at Kintore. After further scrutiny, these votes were not included in the final count.

Election day voting centre

Election Day was Friday 1 December. Mobile voting was conducted over a four day period and included election day, Friday 1 December 2017.

ELECTION

Voting

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

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

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

Voter participation

There were 968 electors enrolled in the Luritja Pintubi Ward at the close of the electoral roll and a total of 375 (39 per cent) voted. This was a seven per cent increase from the 2017 NT Council elections in August.

WARD	ENROLMENT AT 15 November 2017	FORMAL VOTES	INFORMAL VOTES	TOTAL
Luritja Pintubi Ward	968	369	6	375

Post-election scrutinies

Counting commenced at 8:00 am on Monday, 4 December at the Alice Springs NTEC office.

Voters that applied for a postal vote were expected to complete their ballot papers and return them no later than 12:00 noon on Thursday, 7 December to be included in the count. As previously stated, nil postal votes were returned by the due date to be included in the count.

Determination of the quota and the distribution of preferences took place after the cut-off for the return of postal vote ballot papers. Election results were made available on the results pages of the website on Friday, 8 December 2017.

Election of one councillor – Luritja Pintubi Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Audrey TURNER	96
Giselle BARKU	111
Dalton MCDONALD	162
TOTAL	369

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 185.

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

- Dalton McDonald received the quota at count number 1

Dalton McDonald was 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, MacDonnell Regional Council and the Minister for Housing and Community Development.

First preference votes by voting centre

Voting centre	Audrey TURNER	Giselle BARKU	Dalton MCDONALD	Formal	Informal	Total
Haasts Bluff	4	14	25	43	1	44
Kintore	21	74	37	132	3	135
Mt Liebig	60	7	13	80	0	80
Papunya	7	16	86	109	2	111
Alice Springs EVC	4	0	1	5	0	5
TOTAL	96	111	162	369	6	375
	26.0%	30.1%	43.9%	98.4%	1.6%	38.7%

Distribution of preferences: Quota = 185

	Audrey TURNER	Giselle BARKU	Dalton MCDONALD	Exhausted	Total
1st preference votes	96	111	162	0	369
excluded	-	52	44	0	96
Progressive	0	163	206	0	369

Election costs

The estimated cost of the Luritja Pintubi by-election for MacDonnell Regional Council was \$3,209. Following the election, the cost was \$2,035 with a difference of \$1,174.

The difference in cost is a result of the following variances:

- a reduction in staff overtime costs
- a reduction in public awareness expenditure
- a reduction in printing costs.

Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$1,100
Printing	\$528
Operational costs	\$407
TOTAL	\$2,035

ISSUES OF NOTE

Training voting centre staff

- The NTEC and council staff were unable to undertake the necessary face-to-face training that was required for election officials to competently manage voting centres in Papunya. This was due to cultural issues occurring that prohibited access to the community.
- In the future, it is vital that training is undertaken much earlier and delivered in a location outside the community to counteract these types of delays as this deferred the commencement of voting by one day.

Voter turnout

- The NTEC and MRC undertook a partnership to reduce the cost of the election and increase the voter turnout in the ward by providing extended voting periods across four days of voting. The methodology was to deliver similar early voting options as afforded to voters in urban areas of the Northern Territory.
- Voting was open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm for the first three days, and 8:00 am to 12:00 noon on the final day.
- Turnout was the highest in the first two days of voting, with 154 electors turning out to vote. This dropped off substantially in the remaining days.
- The extended voting hours allowed an additional 105 votes across the four communities when compared to the recent 2017 NT Council elections in August. This increased the turnout from 32 per cent to 39 per cent.
- The continued low turnout highlights the need to undertake a roll review in communities to confirm the accuracy of the electoral roll prior to an event.

Informal votes

- It was pleasing to see a very low level of informal voting; this can be attributed to the low number of candidates standing for this event i.e. three.
- The MacDonnell Regional Council supplied communities with material informing voters how to complete a formal vote, this proved beneficial and was reflected in the low informality rate. This practice should continue for future electoral events.

General

- The NT Council election in August and this by-election were effected by either the timing of royalty payments and/or unavoidable cultural issues. A plan of working with the communities to encourage voter participation during these challenges may need to be sought for future events.