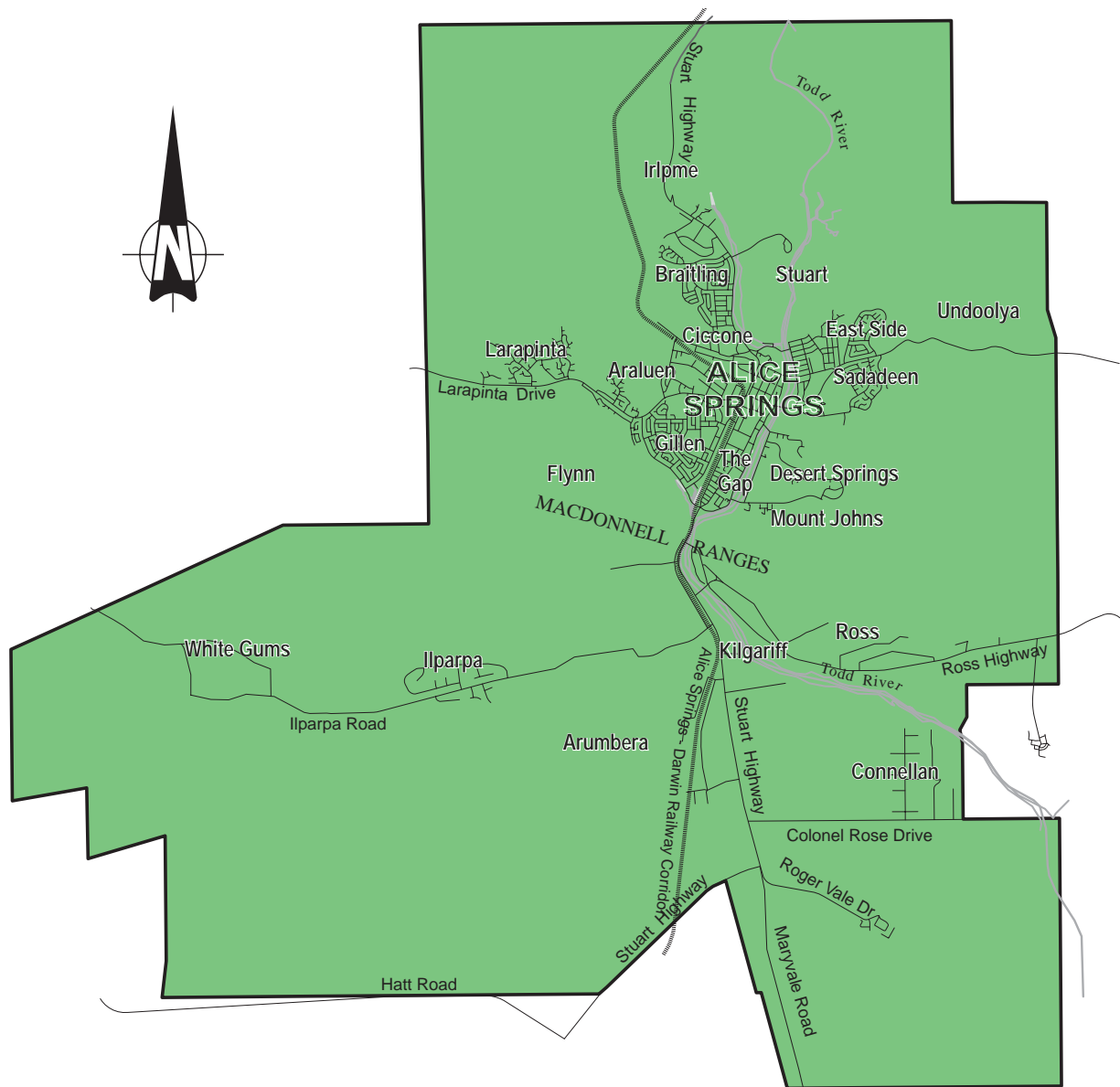




# 2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

## ALICE SPRINGS TOWN COUNCIL ELECTION REPORT





## TIMETABLE

### 2017 NT Council elections

Saturday, 26 August 2017

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

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## BACKGROUND

### Election

- This is the second Local Government (LG) general election under section 85 of the *Local Government Act* (LGA). Amendments to the LGA deferred the election from March 2016 to August 2017. LG general elections are held 12 months after the Legislative Assembly (LA) elections.
- This is the first LG general election that all electors had the option to vote by post or vote early. This was due to legislative change that removed the criteria to lodge an early or postal vote.
- The Commissioner of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is the returning officer for local government general elections.
- Blake Hartman was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC), 2017 NT Council elections.
- Electronic mark-off system (eLAPPS) was used at all voting centres.
- An election charter, detailing the **NTEC's service commitments, was finalised on 4 May 2017** and sent to the council. The document was also available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Alice Springs Town Council and the NTEC was entered into on 17 May 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

### Council

Alice Springs Town Council consists of eight elected council members and one Mayor.

ASTC supplied the following for the 2017 NT Council elections as per the SLA:

- Supply of council venue for early voting and election day voting purposes.
- Suitable council staff to provide early voting services and post-election activities.
- Suitable council vehicle for election purposes.
- Promote the election via its social media outlets.

### Boundary Changes

There were no gazetted changes to the boundaries or the council ward structure from the 2015 review of electoral representation.

### ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July 2017 at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 14,357 electors enrolled for ASTC. This was an increase of 13.6 per cent on the enrolment of 12,630 at the by-election held in October 2015.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

### Campaign

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

### Website

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

### Newsletter

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

### Advertising – print, radio, television

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

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

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

Posters promoting enrolment, nominations and voting were made available to Alice Springs Town Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Centralian Advocate.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and the election participation through 12 interviews with Northern Territory media including ABC Alice Springs, MIX104.9, Aboriginal Broadcasting Network, CAAMA radio and the Centralian Advocate.

### Call centre

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

### Call centre enquiries

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

### Candidate information sessions

Candidate information sessions were conducted on 24 June and 13 July 2017 with a total of 17 participants attending.

In addition to the face-to-face information session, the NTEC in conjunction with LGANT, Dept. Housing and Community Development and the City of Palmerston, developed and produced a short YouTube video explaining the nomination process and candidate requirements relating to the election. This was available on the NTEC & LGANT websites.

### Email and SMS

Email and SMS was used to contact electors who provided these details on their enrolment form. A total of 5,301 emails were sent to electors advising the locations of early and election-day voting centres. At 10:00 am on election day a voting reminder SMS was sent **to 4,212 electors who hadn't cast an early or postal vote.**

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 19 accepted nominations for councillor and two accepted nominations for Mayor.

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

### Summary of accepted nominations/candidates for Alice Springs Town Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Councillor (8 positions available)	Paul ALEKNA
	Eli MELKY
	Donna DIGBY
	Marli BANKS
	Glen AURICHT
	Murray STEWART
	Jason QUIN
	Jenni LILLIS
	Joshua BURGOYNE
	Jodi LENNOX
	Catherine SATOUR
	Matt PATTERSON
	Vince HEISMAN
	John Paul SIRUS
	Jamie DE BRENNI
	John ADAMS
	Jimmy COCKING
Donna LEMON	
Jacinta Nampijinpa PRICE	
Mayor (1 position available)	Damien RYAN
	Jimmy COCKING

### Electronic voter mark-off

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

### Early voting centres (EVCs)

Legislative changes in 2015 allows all electors the option to vote early without the need to meet any eligibility criteria. Overall there is a trend towards voting early across the Northern Territory and Australia. In the Alice Springs Town Council area, an early voting centre was located in the council building from 14 August to 25 August (including Saturday 19 August).

The early voting centre issued 4,845 votes. This was a 34 per cent increase from the by-election held in October 2015 and 46 per cent increase from the 2012 General elections. Votes for Alice Springs Town Council were also issued at other early voting centres across the Northern Territory.

### Votes issued at early voting centres for Alice Springs Town Council

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Alice Springs Council	4,845
Tennant Creek Civic Hall	22
Katherine Central Shopping Centre	6
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	6
Casuarina Library	8
Darwin CBD	19

### Postal voting

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

There were 455 postal votes issued for the ASTC with 283 (62 per cent) admitted to the count. A number of electors who applied for a postal vote ultimately decided to vote in person.

### Election day voting centres

Election day was Saturday, 26 August 2017 with voting centres open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. On election day, electors could vote at any centre within the Alice Springs Town Council area.

With an increased trend for voting before election day, the NTEC proposed a reduction in election day voting centres with Yirara identified as a potential location to be closed. The ASTC decided to keep Yirara as an election day voting centre to service electors residing in the southern part of Alice Springs.

### Election day voting centres and votes issued

ELECTION DAY VOTING CENTRE LOCATIONS	VOTES ISSUED
Alice Springs Town Council, 93 Todd St	1,310
Braitling Primary School, 80 Head St	805
Centralian Senior College, Grevillea Dr	778
Gillen Primary School, 55 Milner Rd	1,155
Living Waters Lutheran School, Albrecht Dr	550
Yirara College, Stuart Hwy	253

### Summary of votes issued at all voting centres

VOTING CENTRE TYPE	LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Election day	Alice Springs	4,851
Early voting	All early voting centres	4,908
Postal voting	Postal votes sent from NTEC Darwin	455

Fifty three per cent of electors voted before election day, either by post or at an early voting centre, highlighting the trend for voters choosing to vote early.

## ELECTION

### Voting

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

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

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

### Vote counting – election night

Vote counting began immediately after the close of voting at 6:00 pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2017. A count of first preference votes for Mayor and councillors was undertaken at each voting centre. First preference votes cast at early voting centres and remote voting teams were counted at the Alice Springs scrutiny centre.

### Post-election night scrutinies

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

Vote counting for the Mayor vacancy was completed manually with a first preference count conducted as there were only two candidates. All votes received for the councillor vacancies were entered into an electronic count system (Easy count) and then re-entered for verification purposes.

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

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



### Election outcomes for Alice Springs Town Council

There were two candidates contesting the Mayor position and 19 candidates contesting eight councillor positions. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

#### Election of Mayor – Alice Springs Town Council

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Damien Ryan	6,446
Jimmy Cocking	3,423
TOTAL	9,869

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 4,935.

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

- Damien Ryan received the quota at count number 1.

Damien Ryan was duly elected.

#### Election of eight councillors – Alice Springs Town Council

At the close of nominations there were 19 candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Paull Alekna	154
Eli Melky	785
Donna Digby	107
Marli Banks	287
Glen Auricht	489
Murray Stewart	286
Jason Quin	97
Jenni Lillis	271
Joshua Burgoyne	382
Jodi Lennox	354
Catherine Satour	213
Matt Paterson	499
Vince Jeisman	152
John Paul Sirius	178
Jamie De Brenni	825
John Adams	171
Jimmy Cocking	1,430
Donna Lemon	167
Jacinta Nampijinpa Price	2,035
TOTAL	8,882

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 987.

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

- Jacinta Nampijinpa Price and Jimmy Cocking received the quota at count number 1
- Jamie De Brenni received the quota at count number 2
- Eli Melky received the quota at count number 9

- Matt Paterson received the quota at count number 254
- Catherine Satour received the quota at count number 282
- Marli Banks received the quota at count number 329
- Glen Auricht received the quota at count number 362

Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, Jimmy Cocking, Jamie De Brenni, Eli Melky, Matt Paterson, Catherine Satour, Marli Banks and Glen Auricht were duly elected.

#### Declared election results for Alice Springs Town Council

Mayor (1 vacancy)	Councillor (8 vacancies)
Damien Ryan	Jacinta Nampijinpa Price Jimmy Cocking Jamie De Brenni Eli Melky Matt Paterson Catherine Satour Marli Banks Glen Auricht

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

#### Declaration of the election results

The election results were declared at the NTEC Alice Springs office at 10:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

#### Election costs

The SLA estimated the cost of the election for Alice Springs Town Council to be \$170,200. Following the election there was no variation to the estimated costs. The council chose to pay half the cost in 2016/17 and the balance after the election.

#### Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$36,255
Staffing	\$83,236
Premises	\$4,500
Operational costs	\$46,209
TOTAL (GST incl.)	\$170,200

## ISSUES OF NOTE:

### Informality

- In the post-election phase, once the 21 day period for objections had expired, the NTEC conducted a survey of informal ballot papers. A total of 1,178 informal votes were received for the councillor position and 27 for the Mayor position. During the informality survey it was identified that 75 per cent (889) of votes for councillor were considered unintentionally informal. The remaining 25 per cent (289) were considered intentionally informal.
- The high number of unintentional informal ballot papers could be attributed to the large number of candidates for councillor (19) where voters either duplicated numbers or missed the sequence. The NTEC attempted to assist voters in casting a formal vote by making the ballot paper larger and advising electors that all boxes must be numbered sequentially.
- Unintentional informal votes are largely due to the increased number of candidates as highlighted in other council elections where the number of candidates exceeded 12.
- Thresholds will be established to allow the NTEC to reassess the size of the ballot paper depending of the number of candidates. For this election a larger sized ballot paper was created for the councillor election.
- Thresholds will be built into inventories to allow amendments to materials for future election day voting centres when there are a high number of candidates, as well as additional staff to manage queues.
- With a high number of informal votes largely attributed to the number of candidates standing at the election, an option for Alice Springs Town Council is to consider implementing wards within the council. This will reduce the number of standing candidates an elector would be required to vote for, resulting in a lower informality rate, while also reducing costs of by-elections.

### Council participation

- It was agreed that council would provide suitable staff to assist with the early voting centre. Whilst council provided numerous staff that worked varying shifts, this resulted in some staff not starting on time and caused an issue with time spent showing new staff processes and procedures. A smaller core group of staff working throughout the entire voting period would ensure a constant level of service and knowledge.
- The SLA, stated that ASTC would provide three council employees to assist with post-election scrutines and re-checks; however, council notified the NTEC post-election day that they were unable to provide these staff. This resulted in the need to employ additional casual staff at short notice. Whilst this added to the cost of the election, this was offset by other savings.

### Non-voters

- A total of 3,691 eligible electors were identified as failing to vote in the 2017 NT Council elections for the Alice Springs Town Council. A further 437 electors provided valid and sufficient reasons as to why they were unable to vote.
- The NTECs role is to extend our service to undertake non-voting follow-up action upon instruction from council. If council wish to proceed, this is a cost recovery service.
- The costs associated in the NTEC undertaking 3,691 potential non-voters for the 2017 NT Council election would be approximately \$14,578.00 (GST inclusive). Based on the experience of pursuing non-voters, these costs would likely be recovered through the payment of the \$50.00 fine.