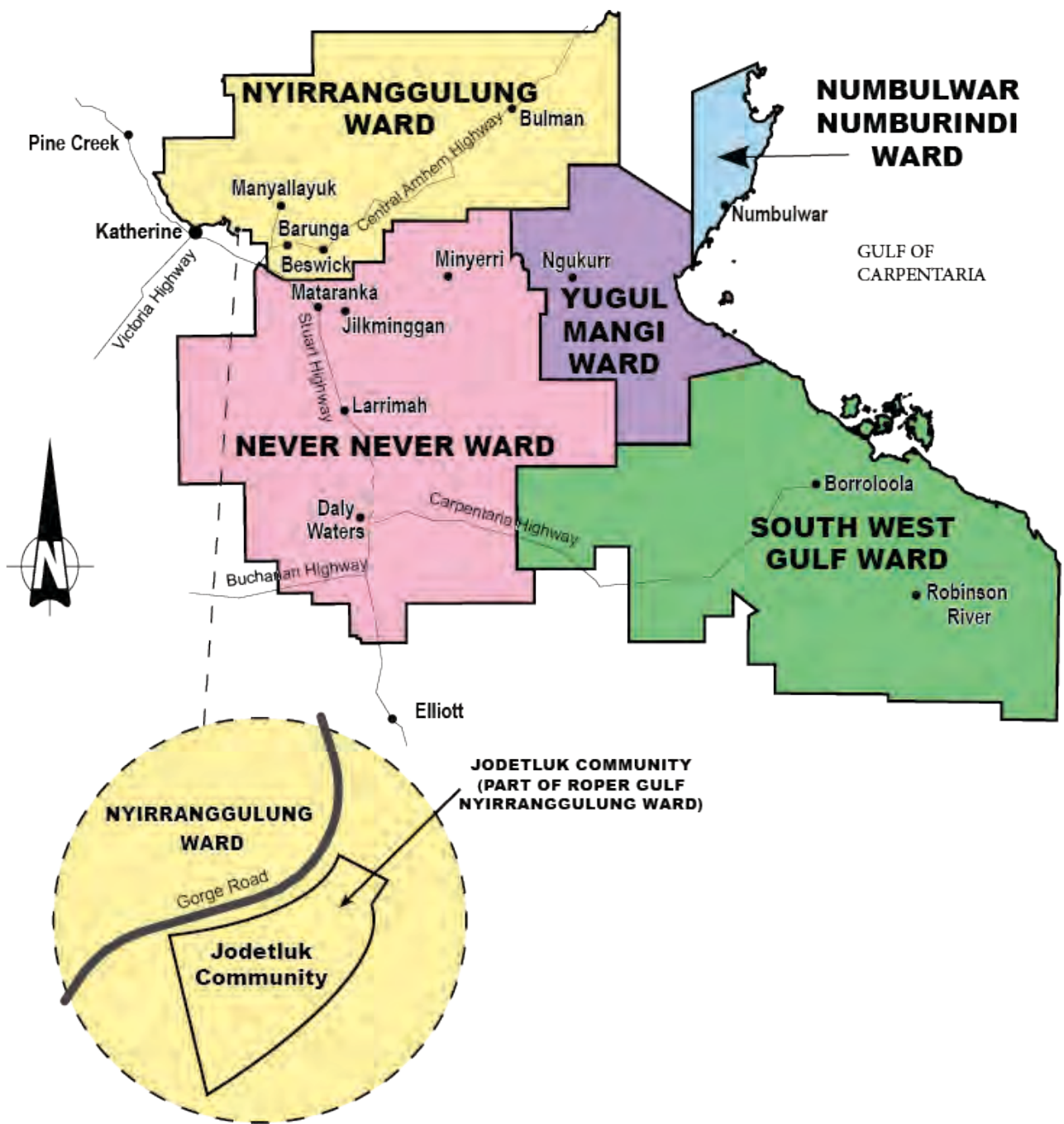




2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

ROPER GULF REGIONAL 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 |

INDEX

| | |
|---|---|
| BACKGROUND | 1 |
| Election | 1 |
| Council | 1 |
| Boundary changes..... | 1 |
| Enrolment..... | 2 |
| PUBLIC AWARENESS | 2 |
| Campaign | 2 |
| Website | 2 |
| Newsletter | 2 |
| Advertising – print, radio, television..... | 2 |
| Call centre | 3 |
| Candidate information sessions | 3 |
| Email and SMS | 3 |
| VOTING SERVICES..... | 3 |
| Nominations | 3 |
| Electronic voter mark-off | 4 |
| Early voting | 4 |
| Postal voting..... | 4 |
| Election day voting centre..... | 4 |
| Remote voting | 4 |
| ELECTION | 5 |
| Voting | 5 |
| Vote counting - election night | 5 |
| Post-election night scrutines..... | 5 |
| Election outcomes for Roper Gulf Regional Council | 5 |
| Voter participation by ward | 5 |
| Election of three Councillors – Never Never Ward | 6 |
| Election of two Councillors - Numbulwar Numburindi Ward | 6 |
| Election of three Councillors - Nyirranggulung Ward | 7 |
| Election of three Councillors – South West Gulf Ward | 7 |
| Election of two Councillors – Yugul Mangi Ward | 7 |
| Declaration of the election results | 8 |
| Election costs..... | 8 |
| ISSUES OF NOTE..... | 8 |
| Voter participation..... | 8 |
| Informality..... | 8 |

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.
- Brian McKivat was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Roper Gulf Regional Council, 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 made available on the website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Roper Gulf Regional Council and the NTEC was entered into on 22 June 2017. This outlined both organisations' **roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.**

Council

Roper Gulf Regional Council consists of five wards: Never Never, Numbulwar Numburindi, Nyirranggulung, South West Gulf and Yugul Mangi.

The council comprises 13 elected council members across the five wards; three elected councillors from Never Never Ward, two elected councillors from Numbulwar Numburindi Ward, three elected councillors from Nyirranggulung Ward, three elected councillors from South West Gulf Ward and two elected councillors from Yugul Mangi Ward.

As per the SLA, Roper Gulf Regional Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections.

- Voting premises in Bulman, Weemol, Beswick, Barunga, Numbulwar, Mataranka, Minyerri, Jilkminggan, Werenbun, Manyallaluk, and Borrooloola.
- Promotion of the election through social media and council sites.
- Council staff as community assistants during remote mobile voting.
- An electoral roll cleansing exercise.

Boundary changes

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

Enrolment

Enrolment initiatives specific to Roper Gulf Regional Council included an electoral roll cleansing project that commenced in March and concluded in June in the following communities: Bulman, Weemol, Beswick, Barunga, Numbulwar, Borroloola, Minyerri, Jilkminggan, and Manyallaluk. The project identified a number of deceased and duplicated electors that were removed from the electoral roll.

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 3,952 electors enrolled for Roper Gulf Regional Council. This was a 2.5 per cent increase from the 2012 General elections.

Enrolment numbers by ward

| COUNCIL | WARD | ENROLMENT |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Roper Gulf Regional Council | Never Never | 815 |
| | Numbulwar Numburindi | 499 |
| | Nyirranggulung | 906 |
| | South West Gulf | 972 |
| | Yugul Mangi | 760 |
| | TOTAL | 3,952 |

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 from 30 June 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. In total, 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, 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 and voting information were made available to Roper Gulf Regional Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Katherine Times and the NT News.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and the election participation through 39 interviews with Northern Territory media including ABC Darwin and Alice Springs, Channel Nine, Territory FM, MIX104.9, Aboriginal Broadcasting Network, CAAMA radio and the NT News.

Call centre

A call centre was activated on Wednesday 2 August and ran until Monday 28 August.

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

A candidate information session was held in Katherine on 23 May 2017.

Email and SMS

Email was used to contact 299 electors in Roper Gulf whom provided these details on their enrolment form. Across the Northern Territory, 30,000 emails were sent advising electors about early and election-day voting centres. At 10:00 am on election day a voting reminder SMS was sent to 300 Roper Gulf **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 23 nominations for councillor across the five wards.

The declaration of nominations took place at the NTEC Darwin 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 nominations/candidates for Roper Gulf Regional Council

| POSITION | CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Never Never Ward Councillor (3 positions) | Annabelle DAYLIGHT |
| | Ossie DAYLIGHT |
| | Judy MACFARLANE |
| | Ian Snr DAYLIGHT |
| Numbulwar Numburindi Ward Councillor (2 positions) | Edwin NUNGGUMAJBARR |
| | Hubert RAMI |
| | David MURRUNGUN |
| | Kathy-Anne NUMAMURDIRDI |
| Nyirranggulong Ward Councillor (3 positions) | Lorraine BENNETT |
| | Selina ASHLEY |
| | Deanna KENNEDY |
| | Wayne RUNYU |
| | Daryl WATSON |
| | Patricia CURTIS-FORBES |
| | Richard MILLER |
| | Helen LEE |
| Andrew HOOD | |
| South West Gulf Councillor (3 positions) | Burton WILLIS |
| | Samuel EVANS |
| | Keith RORY |
| | Don GARNER |
| Yugul Mangi Ward Councillor (2 positions) | Eric Yelawarra ROBERTS |
| | Owen TURNER |

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

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. Voting for Roper Gulf Regional Council was facilitated by remote voting teams.

Postal voting

Legislative changes in 2015 allow all electors the option to apply for a postal vote without meeting any eligibility criteria. There were 135 postal votes issued to electors within the Roper Gulf Regional Council area, and 74 (55 per cent) admitted to the count.

Election day voting centre

Election day for the 2017 NT Council elections was Saturday 26 August. There were no election day voting centres for Roper Gulf Regional Council as voting was conducted by remote voting teams.

Remote voting

Remote voting teams visited the following locations in the lead-up to election day. The teams issued votes for Roper Gulf Regional Council only.

Number of votes issued by remote voting teams

| LOCATION | VOTES ISSUED |
|----------------|--------------|
| Barunga | 102 |
| Beswick | 102 |
| Borrooloola | 202 |
| Bulman | 39 |
| Jilkminggan | 67 |
| Kiana | 7 |
| King Ash Bay | 33 |
| Manyallaluk | 12 |
| Mataranka | 83 |
| Minyerri | 137 |
| Mulggan | 21 |
| Munyalini | 3 |
| Numbulwar | 135 |
| Robinson River | 68 |
| Wandangula | 16 |
| Weemol | 13 |
| Werenbun | 4 |

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

Immediately after the close of voting at 6:00pm on election day, there was a count of first preference votes for early/mobile and postal votes. These counts were conducted at the Darwin scrutiny centre.

Post-election night scrutinies

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

All votes received for the Roper Gulf Regional Councillor positions 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 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 Roper Gulf Regional Council

There were 23 candidates contesting 13 councillor positions across five council wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed tables below.

Voter participation by ward

There were 3,952 people on the electoral roll in the Roper Gulf Regional Council area in the 2017 NT Council elections. Excluding the ward that did not require an election, a total of 3,192 people in the remaining four wards were required to vote. Of this, 1,238 (39 per cent) voted.

| WARD | ENROLMENT AT 25 JULY 2017 | FORMAL VOTES | INFORMAL VOTES | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Never Never Ward | 815 | 364 | 9 | 373 |
| Numbulwar Numburrindi Ward | 499 | 137 | 13 | 150 |
| Nyirrangulung Ward | 906 | 313 | 26 | 339 |
| South West Gulf Ward | 964 | 364 | 12 | 376 |
| Yugul Mangi Ward | 760 | <i>Voting not required</i> | | |

Election of three Councillors – Never Never Ward

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

| CANDIDATE | FIRST PREFERENCES |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Annabelle DAYLIGHT | 51 |
| Ossie DAYLIGHT | 34 |
| Judy MACFARLANE | 268 |
| Ian Snr DAYLIGHT | 11 |
| TOTAL | 364 |

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 92.

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

- Judy MacFarlane received the quota at count number 1
- Annabelle Daylight and Ossie Daylight received the quota at count number 2

Judy McFarlane, Annabelle Daylight and Ossie Daylight were duly elected.

Election of two Councillors - Numbulwar Numburindi Ward

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

| CANDIDATE | FIRST PREFERENCES |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Edwin NUNGGUMAJBARR | 39 |
| Hubert RAMI | 11 |
| David MURRUNGUN | 65 |
| Kathy-Anne NUMAMURDIRDI | 22 |
| TOTAL | 137 |

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 45.

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

- David Murrungun received the quota at count number 1
- Edwin Nungumajbarr received the quota at count number 2

David Murrungun and Edwin Nungumajbarr were duly elected.

Election of three Councillors - Nyirranggulung Ward

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

| CANDIDATE | FIRST PREFERENCES |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Lorraine BENNETT | 35 |
| Selina ASHLEY | 31 |
| Deanna KENNEDY | 24 |
| Wayne RUNYU | 18 |
| Daryl WATSON | 6 |
| Patricia CURTIS-FORBES | 9 |
| Richard MILLER | 1 |
| Helen LEE | 184 |
| Andrew HOOD | 5 |
| TOTAL | 313 |

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 79.

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

- Helen Lee received the quota at count number 1
- Selina Ashley and Wayne Runyu received the quota at count number 25

Helen Lee, Selina Ashley and Wayne Runyu were duly elected.

Election of three Councillors – South West Gulf Ward

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

| CANDIDATE | FIRST PREFERENCES |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Burton Willis | 54 |
| Samuel Evans | 124 |
| Keith Rory | 76 |
| Don Garner | 110 |
| TOTAL | 364 |

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 92.

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

- Samuel Evans and Don Garner received the quota at count number 1
- Keith Rory received the quota at count number 3

Samuel Evans, Don Garner and Keith Rory were duly elected.

Election of two Councillors – Yugul Mangi Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Eric Yelawarra Roberts and Owen Turner were elected.

Declaration of the election results

The election results were declared in Katherine at 10:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

Declared election results for Roper Gulf Regional Council

| NEVER NEVER WARD (3 VACANCIES) | NUMBULWAR NUMBURINDI WARD (2 VACANCIES) | NYIRRANGGULUNG WARD (3 VACANCIES) | SOUTH WEST GULF WARD (3 VACANCIES) | YUGUL MANGI WARD (2 VACANCIES) |
|---|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Judy MacFarlane Annabelle Daylight Ossie Daylight | David Murrungun Edwin Nunggumajbarr | Helen Lee Selina Ashley Wayne Runyu | Samuel Evans Don Garner Keith Rory | Eric Yelawarra Roberts Owen Turner |

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

Election costs

The SLA estimated the cost of the election for Roper Gulf Regional Council to be \$82,217. Following the election, the cost was \$68,190 with a saving of \$14,027.

Summary of election costs

| ELECTION AREA | COSTS |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Public awareness | \$16,670 |
| Staffing | \$12,361 |
| Vehicles & Air charters | \$13,071 |
| Operational costs | \$26,088 |
| TOTAL | \$68,190 |

ISSUES OF NOTE

Voter participation

- A matter for further discussion and research is the reasoning behind low voter turnout. The number of candidates contesting the various ward elections was **promising; however, the same level of interest didn't flow through to** electors, resulting in only 39 per cent voting.

Informality

In the post-election phase, once the 21-day period for objections had expired, a survey of informal ballot papers for Roper Gulf Regional Council was conducted.

- A total of 60 informal votes were received across all wards. During the informality survey it was identified that 88 per cent were deemed unintentionally informal, of which most had duplicated numbers or were incomplete. The remaining 12 per cent were blank ballot papers.
- Of the total 60 informal votes cast across all wards, 88 per cent were assumed **unintentional as they had duplicated numbers or hadn't completed** numbers in all boxes. The remaining 12 per cent were blank ballot papers. The Nyirranggulung Ward had a higher rate of informal votes, likely due to a higher number of candidates on the ballot paper.