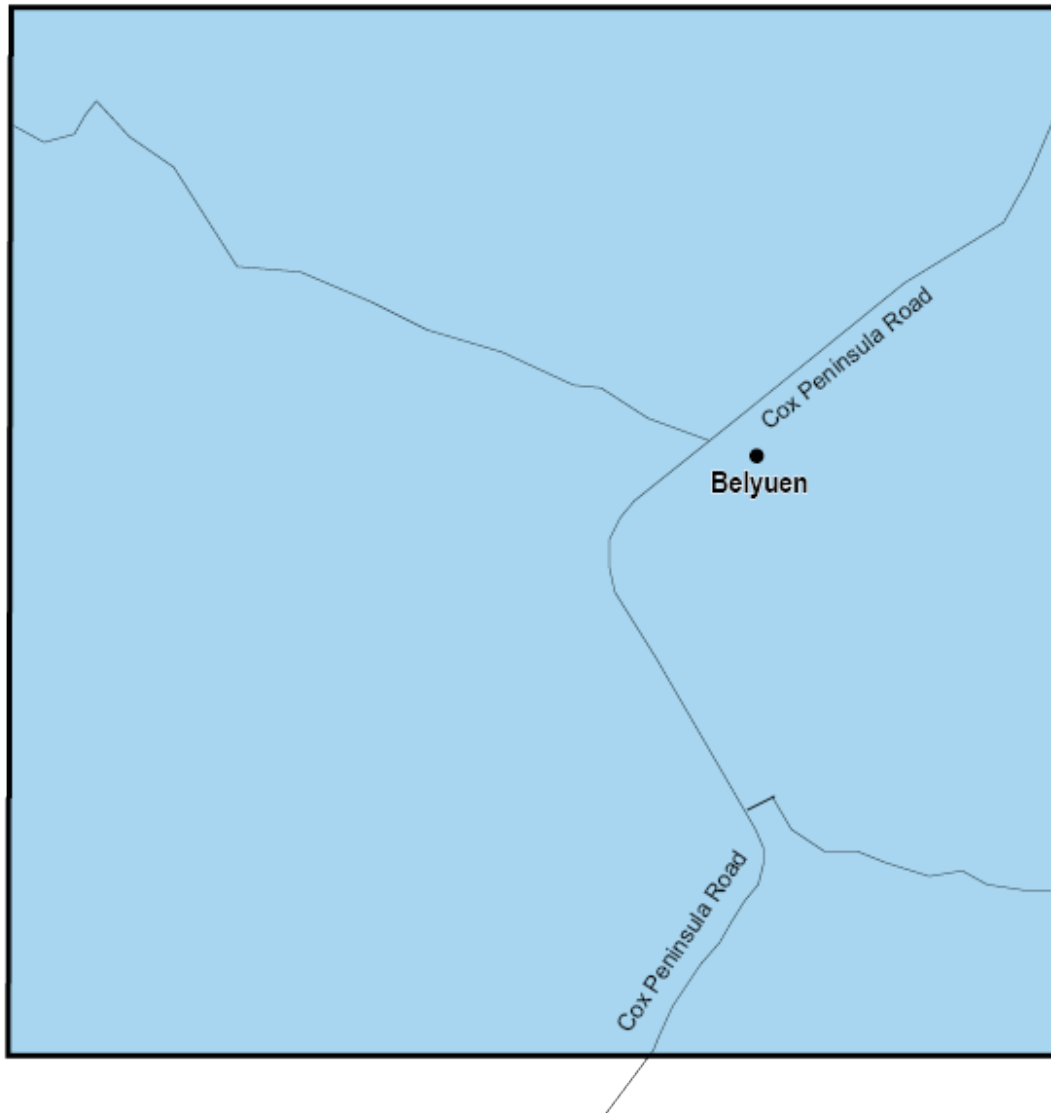




2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

BELYUEN COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT 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 first time Belyuen Community Government Council has been included in Local Government (LG) general elections since the council was suspended in 2007. The council was reinstated by the Minister on 1 August 2017.
- On 23 June 2017 the number of sitting members was changed from eight to five.
- 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 now held 12 months after the Legislative Assembly (LA) election.
- 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.
- Elizabeth West was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Belyuen Community Government 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 April 2017 and sent to the council. The document was also available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Belyuen Community Government Council and the NTEC was entered into on 6 July 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

Council

Belyuen Community Government Council consists of five elected council members.

As per the SLA, Belyuen Community Government Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections:

- Promotion of election milestones by displaying posters within the council area
- Providing premises free-of-charge
- 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 Belyuen Community Government Council included an electoral roll cleanse in July 2017. The project identified a number of deceased and duplicated electors that were removed from the electoral roll. Unfortunately there were a number of other enrolled residents identified as not living at Belyuen; however, as their new address details were not known, objection action to remove them from the roll could not be undertaken on this occasion.

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 144 electors enrolled for Belyuen Community Government Council. This was an increase of 15 per cent on the enrolment of 122 at the 2012 General elections.

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. 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 NT 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, nominations and voting were made available to the council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections. Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the NT News.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and voting 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 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

A candidate information session was conducted by Angela Pattison (LGANT), Greg Hibble and Elizabeth West (NTEC) on 14 July 2017 with approximately 20 participants attending.

Email and SMS

Email and SMS was used to contact Belyuen Community Government Council electors, whom had provided these details on their enrolment form. Across the Northern Territory, 30,000 emails were sent advising electors of early and election-day voting centres.

VOTING SERVICES

Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. A total of nine nominations were received and accepted, no nominations were rejected.

The declaration of nominations took place at the NTEC Darwin office starting at 12:00 noon 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 Belyuen Community Government Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Councillor (5 positions)	Trevor BIANAMU
	Gavin BIANAMU
	John MOREEN
	Roger YARROWIN
	Celia LEWIS
	Raylene SINGH
	Lorraine LANE
	Rex EDMUNDS
	Zoe SINGH

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 and Australia.

Early voting services were provided by a remote voting team at the Belyuen Council office on Monday 14 August, open from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm. Votes for Belyuen Community Government Council were also taken at other early voting centres across the Territory.

Votes issued at NT early voting centres and remote voting team for Belyuen Community Government Council

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Belyuen Council office (remote voting team)	76
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	2
Darwin CBD	1

Postal voting

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

There were 5 postal votes issued for Belyuen Community Government Council with a total of two (40 per cent) admitted to the count.

Election day voting centre

Election day was Saturday 26 August. There was no election day voting centre in the Belyuen Community Government Council area.

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 the first preference votes at each voting centre
- a count of the first preference votes for early/mobile and postal votes.

Post-election night scrutinies

All votes received for the Belyuen Community Government Council 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 considered for 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 late evening on Friday, 1 September 2017.

Election outcomes for Belyuen Community Government Council

There were nine candidates contesting five positions on the council. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

Of the 144 people on the electoral roll in the Belyuen Community Government Council area a total of 83 (58 per cent) voted.

Election of five Councillors

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Trevor BIANAMU	7
Gavin BIANAMU	3
John MOREEN	4
Roger YARROWIN	6
Cecilia LEWIS	2
Raylene SINGH	3
Lorraine LANE	0
Rex EDMUNDS	40
Zoe SINGH	8
TOTAL	73

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 12.

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

- Rex Edmunds received the quota at count number 1
- Cecilia Lewis received the quota at count number 4
- Zoe Singh and Roger Yarrowin received the quota at count number 6
- John Moreen received the quota at count number 9

Rex Edmunds, Cecilia Lewis, Zoe Singh, Roger Yarrowin and John Moreen were duly elected.

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 results were declared at the NTEC office in Darwin at 10:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

Declared results for Belyuen Community Government Council

COUNCILLORS (5 vacancies)
Rex EDMUNDS Cecilia LEWIS Zoe SINGH Roger YARROWIN John MOREEN

Election costs

The SLA estimated the cost of the election for Belyuen Community Government Council to be \$3,706. Following the election there was no variation to the estimated costs.

Summary of election costs

Election area	Costs incurred
Public awareness	\$500
Staffing	\$2,285
Operational costs	\$1,416
TOTAL	\$3,706

ISSUES OF NOTE

Enrolment

- Although a roll cleansing exercise identified a number of electors who had left the community, these were not actioned by the AEC due to the lack of a known forwarding address. If this had been possible to action the actual turnout figure for Belyuen would have been closer to 70 per cent, which considering Belyuen's size and location, is an excellent result on par with many urban locations.

Nominations

- A total of nine nominations were accepted; however, the majority of these were received on Wednesday 2 August 2017 – 1 day before nominations closed. Had there not been an effort by staff from the Department of Local Government and the council CEO to publicise nominations there would likely have been a need for a supplementary election.

Election day voting centre

- There was no election day voting centre provided at Belyuen; however, no negative feedback was received from electors.

Council

- There are a small number of electors (144) electing a five member council in Belyuen. There may be a requirement to review the structure of the council given the current system has seen a member elected with only four first preference votes.

Informality

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

- A total of 10 informal votes were received. During the informality survey it was identified that none of these were considered to be assumed intentionally informal.
- All informal votes cast were considered to be unintentionally informal, of these a total of five contained duplicate numbers and two contained ticks or crosses. The remainder of the informal votes were either incomplete or had non-sequential numbers.

Non-voters

- A total of 55 (38 per cent) eligible electors were identified as failing to vote in the 2017 NT Council elections for the Belyuen Community Government Council. Four electors provided valid and sufficient reasons as to why there were unable to vote.

We would like to extend our thanks for the support from Cathy Winsley and staff at Belyuen.