



Northern Territory
Electoral Commission
EVERY vote counts



2025 GROOTE ARCHIPELAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL GENERAL ELECTION REPORT

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Election timetable

2025 Groote Archipelago Regional Council

15 March 2025

Date	Time	
Friday 31 January		Nominations open
Tuesday 11 February	5:00 pm	Electoral roll closes
Thursday 20 February	12:00 noon	Nominations close
	2:30 pm	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Monday 24 February		Postal vote mail-out commences
Monday 3 March	8:00 am	Early voting commences
Monday 10 March	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 11 March	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Thursday 13 March	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Friday 14 March	6:00 pm	Early voting ceases
Saturday 15 March		Election day
	9:00 am	Election day voting commences
	4:00 pm	Election day voting ceases
		Mobile voting ceases
	6:00 pm	Primary counts of ordinary, postal and early votes commence
Monday 17 March	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Thursday 20 March	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Friday 28 March	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
	2:00 pm	Distribution of preferences
Monday 31 March	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

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BACKGROUND

Election

A prospective new local government area was established via Gazette notice (S45) on 17 August 2022 under the name Warnindilyakwa Regional Council. This prospective council area would replace the Anindilyakwa Ward of East Arnhem Regional Council to be a stand-alone council. The name of the prospective council was formally changed to Groote Archipelago Regional Council via Gazette notice (S49) on 18 July 2023.

The inaugural general election for the new council was originally planned for March 2024, but this was postponed to occur after the 2024 Territory Election in August 2024.

A Gazette notice (S38) on 16 May 2024 formally constituted the Groote Archipelago Regional Council and abolished the Anindilyakwa Ward of East Arnhem Regional Council effective from 1 September 2024. This gazette also determined that the new council would have 7 elected members.

A Gazette notice (S86) on 11 September 2024 set the inaugural general election for 26 October 2024. Nominations opened on Friday 13 September and closed at 12 noon on Thursday 3 October. At the declaration of nominations on Friday 4 October 2024, 22 candidates were declared. An initial dispatch of postal votes was sent on Monday 7 October and early voting opened at the NTEC office in Darwin on Monday 14 October with no votes issued at the early voting centre and no postal votes returned.

The time for holding the general election was changed by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development via a Gazette notice (S91) on 18 October 2024 to 15 March 2025. The reason for the change was to allow for further consultation about a ward structure for the new council. Candidates were contacted by the NT Electoral Commission and advised of the change.

On 13 January 2025 via Gazette notice (S3) under section 16(2) of the *Local Government Act 2019* with reference to section 16(1)(k) and (m) of the Act, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development created a 3-ward structure for Groote Archipelago Regional Council and determined the following representation structure:

- Central Ward – 3 members
- East Ward – 2 members
- West Ward – 2 members.

The inaugural general election for Groote Archipelago Regional Council was held on 15 March 2025.

Legislation

With regards to local government elections:

- Section 134(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2019* (the Act) authorises the Minister for Local Government to call a general election for a newly constituted local government area.
- Section 160 of the Act allows the Minister to extend the time for holding an election or for taking any step in relation to the holding of an election.

Electoral Service Agreement

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) provides Electoral Service Agreements when conducting elections for local government councils which establishes the costing program for the preparation and conduct of the election based on the assumption that all wards (if any) are to be contested.

Due to the changing dates for the general election, the NTEC and Groote Archipelago Regional Council had 2 executed agreements:

- An Electoral Service Agreement effective from 6 August 2024 to 30 November 2024 between the NTEC and the Constituting Member of Groote Archipelago Regional Council; and
- An Electoral Service Agreement effective from 1 December 2024 to 19 April 2025 between the NTEC and the Chief Executive Officer of Groote Archipelago Regional Council.

The agreements stated that the NTEC would apply the requirements of the Act and Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021, and provided details of the voting services, including a remote voting schedule. The agreements also detailed services provided or facilitated by the council which would offset final costs.

For the general election held 15 March 2025, the Groote Archipelago Regional Council opted to provide or facilitate the following in order to offset costs:

- disseminate and display posters advertising voting dates and times
- facilitate the placement of banners on suitable spaces
- provide assistance to candidates during the nomination process in completing and uploading their nomination form to the NTEC website
- facilitate voting centre premises where required
- facilitate logistical arrangements such as vehicles, pickups/drop offs, and accommodation at no cost
- promote the election through its social media channels including the publication of public notices on the council website
- participate in regular meetings during the election period and any post-election de-brief scheduled.

ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 11 February 2025 at 5:00pm, there was a total of 1,137 electors enrolled in the Groote Archipelago Regional Council area. This is an 30.5% increase in enrolment (up from 871 electors) from the previous local government general elections held in 2021 when comparing with the Anindilyakwa Ward of East Arnhem Regional Council.

At the close of electoral roll for this election, enrolment for each ward was as follows:

Central Ward	724
East Ward	314
West Ward	99
TOTAL	1,137

CANDIDATES

Nominations opened on Friday 31 January 2025 and closed on Thursday 20 February 2025 at 12 noon. There was a total of 9 accepted nominations for 7 vacancies. Only Central Ward required an election with East Ward and West Ward being uncontested having received 2 nominations each for their 2 vacancies.

The declaration of nominations and draw for ballot position order for the Central Ward election took place at the NTEC office on Friday 31 January at 2:30 pm with candidates and council stakeholders invited to attend via Microsoft Teams. The ballot paper positions for each candidate were selected by a random number generator and results were uploaded onto the NTEC's website and Facebook page once the draw was completed.

Summary of accepted nominations/candidates

Position	Candidates in ballot paper order
Councillor – Central Ward (3 vacancies)	Gordon WALSH
	Leonard AMAGULA
	Gregson LALARA
	Rosalie LALARA
	Fabian LALARA
Councillor – East Ward	Mildred MAMARIKA

(2 vacancies)	Constantine MAMARIKA
Councillor – West Ward	Violet HUDDLESTONE
(2 vacancies)	Kieranson WURRAMARA

VOTING SERVICES

Postal voting

All electors have the option to postal vote and applications can be made from 3 months before election day.

Postal votes were despatched from Monday 24 February 2025 to Thursday 13 March 2025 and had to be returned by 12 noon Friday 28 March 2025 to be eligible to be admitted to the count.

Postal votes were arranged for eligible prisoners at Darwin based correctional centres which made up the majority of postal vote applications for this election (20 out of 25 total applications).

Postal voting statistics

Postal voting	Number
Postal vote applications received	25
Postal votes issued	23 (92.0% of applications)
Postal vote applications rejected	2 (8.0% of applications)
Postal votes returned	20 (87.0% of postal votes issued)
Postal votes not returned	3 (13.0% of postal votes issued)
Postal votes admitted to the count	15 (75.0% of postal votes returned)
Postal votes rejected	5 (25.0% of postal votes returned)

The reasons for rejecting postal vote applications were:

- Ward uncontested (1)
- No election (elector enrolled in Alyangula which is not part of Groote Archipelago Regional Council) (1).

The reasons for rejecting the returned postal votes were:

- endorsed as returned to sender (2)
- signature did not match (2)
- postal vote certificate not signed (1).

Early voting

Early voting services were provided at the NTEC office in Darwin from Monday 3 March 2025 to Friday 14 March 2025 during office hours. No early votes were issued for this election.

Remote mobile voting

A remote mobile voting team provided voting services in 2 communities in the Central Ward from Thursday 13 March to Saturday 15 March.

Remote voting statistics

Community	Date	Time	Ordinary votes issued*	Declaration votes issued*	Total votes issued*
Malkala	13 March	12 noon – 3:00 pm	14	4	18
Angurugu	14 March	9:00 am – 4:00 pm	58	8	66
Angurugu	15 March	9:00 am – 4:00 pm	21	4	25
TOTAL			93	16	109

*Number of votes issued does not always equate to the number of votes counted.

To further assist voters, council staff arranged to pick up voters from Bardalumba and other nearby outstations and drive them to the voting centre at Malkala.

Declaration voting

A declaration vote can be issued to a person who cannot be found on the electoral roll by completing and signing a declaration envelope. Their ballot paper is placed in the envelope and a scrutiny of all declaration envelopes occurs during the count period.

Legislative amendments passed in May 2021 created a savings provision for local government elections that allows eligible electors who are unenrolled at the close of roll date, a chance to have their vote admitted to the count. During the declaration scrutiny process, all declaration envelopes are forwarded to the Australian Electoral Commission and eligible electors are added to the roll using the envelope as an enrolment form. Where the entitlement to vote is confirmed, the vote will count. Where voters are unable to be enrolled or are found to be already enrolled in a different council area in the NT, the declaration vote is rejected.

Declaration voting statistics

Total declaration votes processed	Admitted to the count	Rejected
16	5 (31.2%)	11 (68.8%)

The rejected declaration votes were due to:

- elector enrolled in a different council area in the NT (8)
- elector enrolled in a different ward, but within the council area (2)
- the elector could not be enrolled (insufficient evidence of identity) (1).

Voting summary**Number of votes counted by vote type (for Central Ward only)**

Vote type	No. of votes counted	% of total votes
Remote mobile team	92	82.1%
Declaration voting	5	4.5%
Postal voting	15	13.4%
TOTAL	112	100%
Formal votes	103	92.0%
Informal votes	9	8.0%

Turnout and participation (for Central Ward only)

Turnout	Number or percentage
Enrolment at close of roll	724
Total votes counted	112
Turnout rate – by number of votes counted	15.5%
Participation	Number or percentage
Postal vote applications rejected (voter eligible)	0
Postal votes not returned	13
Postal votes returned but rejected	5
Declaration votes rejected (voter eligible)	11
Excuses lodged (prior to non-voter action)	0
Total additional participation	29
TOTAL participation	141
Participation rate	19.5%

Informality

Election	Informality rate	Unintentional informality rate	Intentional informality rate
Central Ward	8.0%	100%	0%

ELECTION OUTCOMES**Voting system**

The voting system for local government elections when there are multiple vacancies is proportional representation:

- Electors must number all the boxes on their ballot paper sequentially starting with the number one for their first choice for their vote to be formal.
- First preference votes for each candidate on formal ballot papers are counted, then a quota is calculated.
- The quota is calculated using the following formula: (total number of formal votes / number of vacancies + one) + one.
- 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 are filled.
- Easy Count software is used for multi vacancy elections where the proportional representation system is applied.

Vote counting – election day

Vote counting began at 6:00pm on Saturday 15 March 2025 on Groote Eylandt where the final day of remote mobile voting had taken place. A first preference count of ballot papers cast with the remote voting team were counted.

Returned postal votes and declaration votes were not counted on this day.

Remote mobile ballot papers were then transferred to the NTEC office in Darwin for the remainder of the count period.

Post-election day counts

- During the first week of the count, declaration votes were sent to and processed by the Australian Electoral Commission, then a scrutiny of declaration votes was conducted to determine those to be admitted to and rejected from the count.
- All remote mobile ballot papers were entered into Easy Count twice, by different operators, for verification (this verification process replaces a fresh scrutiny).

Final day of counting – 28 March 2025

- Following the deadline for the receipt of postal votes at 12 noon on Friday 28 March 2025, a manual initial count of the first preferences of admitted postal and declaration votes was conducted.
- The admitted postal and declaration votes were then entered twice into Easy Count.
- After the postal and declaration votes had been admitted to the count, the quota required to be elected was calculated.
- As only one candidate achieved the quota on first preferences, a distribution of preferences was required which was conducted by Easy Count.

Results – CENTRAL WARD – 3 vacancies

The first preference votes received by each candidate contesting the Central Ward were recorded as follows:

Candidate	First preference votes	First preferences x 100
Gordon WALSH	43	4,300
Leonard AMAGULA	11	1,100
Gregson LALARA	13	1,300
Rosalie LALARA	12	1,200
Fabian LALARA	24	2,400
TOTAL	103	10,300

When calculating the quota where the total number of first preference votes is 150 or less, the number of ballot papers are multiplied by 100, which is how the distribution of preferences is displayed on the NTEC website. (Schedule 1 section (5)(3) of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021.)

Therefore, in order to calculate the quota and conduct the distribution of preferences, the total number of first preference votes was 10,300, and the quota was 2,675 votes to be elected.

Only one candidate achieved the quota from first preference votes, therefore a distribution of preferences was required.

Following the distribution of preferences (conducted by Easy Count), the following candidates were elected as councillors for Central Ward:

- **Gordon WALSH** achieved the quota at count number 1
- **Fabian LALARA** achieved the quota at count number 2

- **Gregson LALARA** achieved the quota at count number 6

All results are available on the [NTEC website](#).

Results – EAST WARD – 2 vacancies

As there were only 2 candidates for the 2 vacancies in East Ward, the following 2 candidates were declared elected at the declaration of nominations on Thursday 20 February 2025:

- **Mildred MAMARIKA**
- **Constantine MAMARIKA**

Results – WEST WARD – 2 vacancies

As there were only 2 candidates for the 2 vacancies in West Ward, the following 2 candidates were declared elected at the declaration of nominations on Thursday 20 February 2025:

- **Violet HUDDLESTONE**
- **Kieranson WURRAMARA**

Declaration of the results

On Monday 31 March 2025 the results of the Groote Archipelago Regional Council general election were officially declared at the NTEC Darwin office.

A letter to the CEO of the Groote Archipelago Regional Council certifying the result of the general elections, and a letter to the Minister for Local Government advising of the result, was both sent via email on Monday 31 March 2025.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Some public awareness activities had already occurred in September and October 2024 before the inaugural general election was delayed to March 2025. These initial activities have been included in the summary below.

Website

A web page for the general election was originally launched on 5 September 2024. The web page provided information on nominating, candidates, voting services and results, as well as information on the changing of the time for the election.

Print

The following public notice statutory advertisements were placed in the NT News:

- 13 September 2024 – Call for nominations
- 8 October 2024 – Voting information and list of candidates
- 25 October 2024 – Change of time for holding the general election
- 31 January 2025 – Call for nominations
- 24 February 2025 – Voting information, list of candidates (Central Ward) and duly elected candidates (East Ward and West Ward)

Direct messaging to voters

Any elector who has provided either their mobile phone number or email address (or both) are able to be contacted directly by the NTEC to provide election information. Eligible electors in the council area received direct messages providing information about the election, enrolment and voting.

10 September 2024 – Election update/Check your enrolment

- SMS messages were sent to 233 electors
- Emails were sent to 40 electors

5 February 2025 – Election update/Check your enrolment

- SMS messages were sent to 244 electors
- Emails were sent to 47 electors

14 March 2025 – Voting information (Central Ward electors only)

- SMS messages were sent to 123 electors

Social media

Throughout the election period, the NTEC regularly posted on Facebook about:

- Enrolment
- Postal voting
- candidate information session dates and times
- Nominating as a candidate
- List of candidates
- Voting services
- Election results

The council also posted this information on their Facebook page.

Radio

30 second advertisements and live reads were played on radio network TEABBA via stations 102.9FM (Angurugu) and 106.3FM (Umbakumba) during the election period.

Media Releases

Throughout the election period 10 media releases and advisories were sent to media contacts; 4 during September and October 2024, and 6 in February and March 2025.

The media releases highlighted key dates and events like nominations opening, the declaration of nominations, the commencement of voting services, initial count results and final results.

DONATIONS DISCLOSURE

Part 8.6 of the new *Local Government Act 2019* introduced new requirements for all candidates in local government elections and by-elections, to submit campaign donation returns covering a prescribed disclosure period. The NTEC then makes this information available for public viewing by publishing the returns on its website. Candidates only need to disclose donations received for campaigning purposes and are not required to disclose nil returns or election expenditure.

The NTEC provides resources and support for candidates to meet their disclosure obligations. Disclosure and publication of such returns aims to provide greater transparency of candidate funding during election campaigns.

The key dates of financial disclosure obligations for the elections were:

Election day	15 March 2025
Disclosure period	1 July 2024 – 14 April 2025
Return due date	24 May 2025

No campaign donation returns were submitted.

ELECTION COSTS

The estimated cost for the Groote Archipelago Regional Council general election held 15 March 2025 was \$50,489 (GST included).

With both the East Ward and West Ward being uncontested, and other cost savings, the final actual costs invoiced to the council was \$40,247 (GST included).

The breakdown of costs for the general election was as follows:

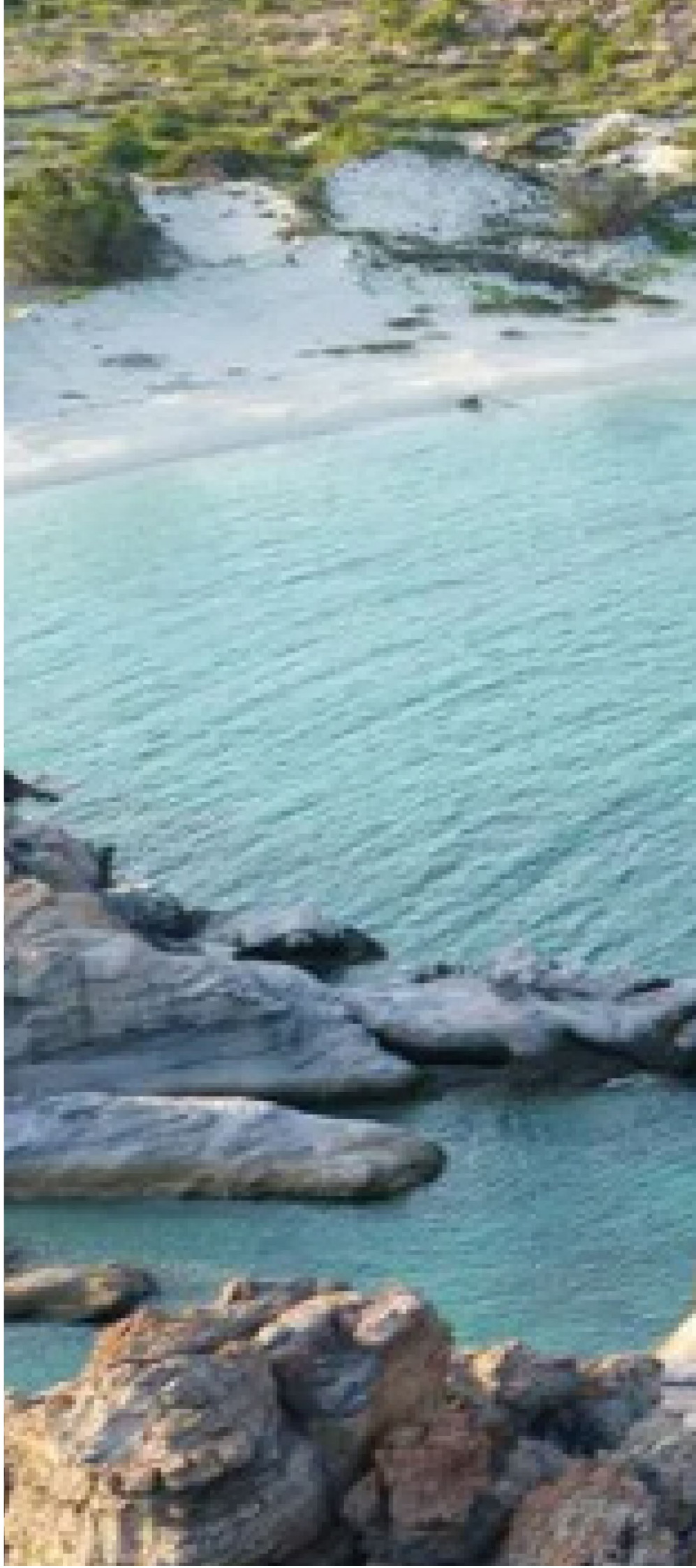
Expense category	Cost
Plane charters	\$14,555
Staff wages (including overtime, super, payroll tax)	\$10,285
Staff accommodation	\$3,782
Statutory advertising NT News	\$2,512
Staff travel allowances	\$1,823
Advertising – radio	\$1,735
Ballot paper printing	\$764
Website	\$500
Staff airfares	\$396
Advertising – social media	\$91
Advertising – SMS	\$91
Postal votes	\$54
Sub-total	\$36,588
GST (10%)	\$3,659
TOTAL	\$40,247

The Groote Archipelago Regional Council was also invoiced for election costs incurred from the postponed election scheduled for 26 October. As the postponement was notified on 18 October 2025, certain election activities like statutory advertising, NTEC staff travel to support nominations, printing of ballot papers, despatch of postal votes, and training of remote mobile staff had already taken place.

Election costs of \$10,372 (including GST) were invoiced to the council on 7 January 2025.

The breakdown of costs for the general election scheduled for 26 October 2024 is as follows:

Expense category	Cost
Staff travel/accommodation	\$4,364
Advertising and other public awareness	\$3,153
Ballot paper printing	\$1,282
Staff wages	\$620
Postage	\$10
Sub-total	\$9,429
GST (10%)	\$943
TOTAL	\$10,372



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