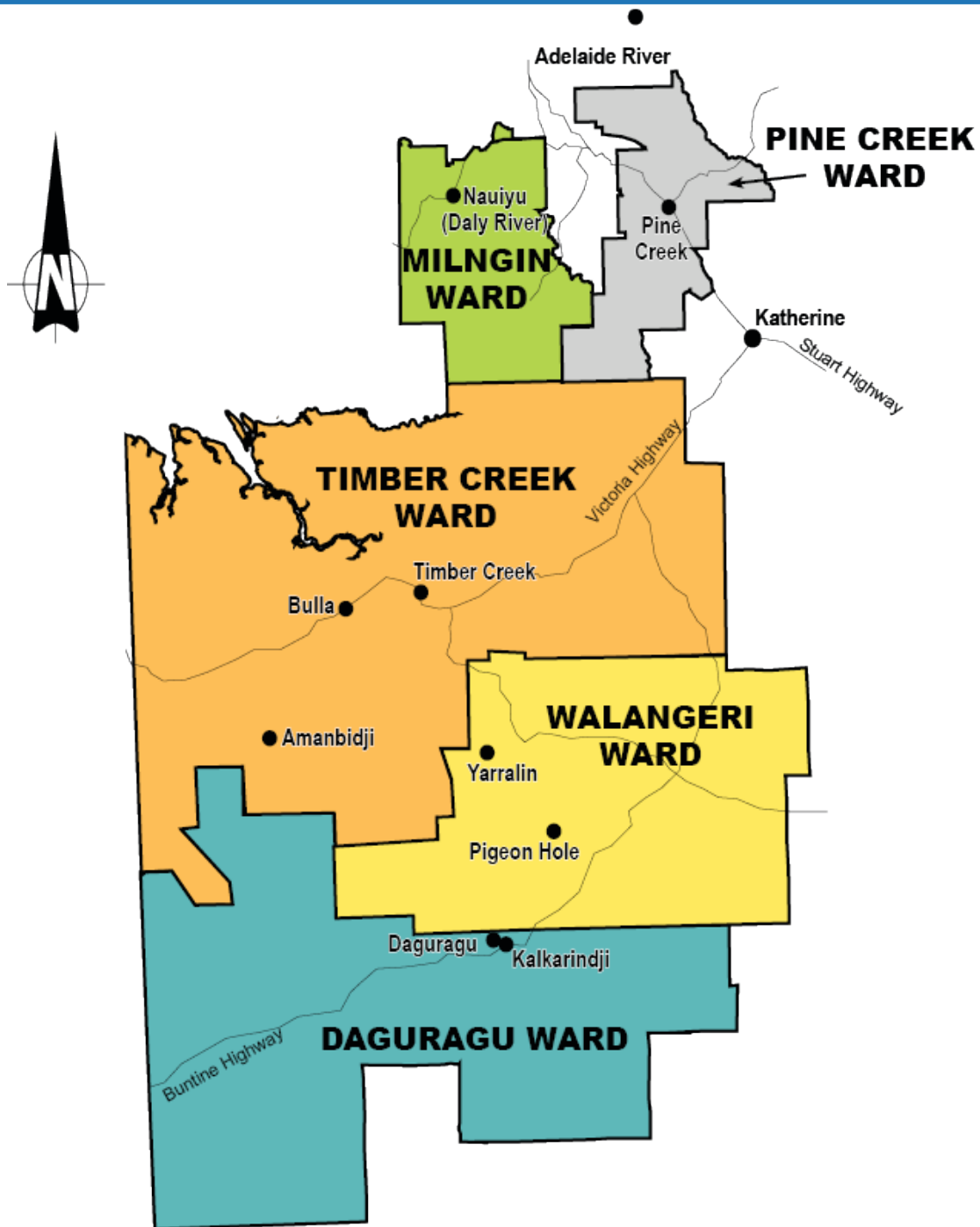




# 2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

## VICTORIA DALY 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
<b>Saturday 26 August</b>		<b>Election day</b>
	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.
- Brian McKivat was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Victoria Daly 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 NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Victoria Daly Regional Council and the NTEC was entered into on 7 June 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

### **Council**

Victoria Daly Regional Council consists of five wards: Daguragu, Milngin, Pine Creek, Timber Creek and Walangeri.

The council comprises five elected council members, one from each ward.

As per the SLA, Victoria Daly Regional Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT council elections:

- The use of council owned premises in Timber Creek, Yarralin, Pigeon Hole, Kybrook Farm, and Pine Creek for voting.
- Accommodation at Timber Creek and Top Springs for remote voting teams.
- Promotion of the election via council's social media outlets.
- Council staff as community assistants during remote mobile voting.
- Council staff as remote team members.
- The use of a Council owned vehicle for remote mobile voting.
- An electoral roll cleansing exercise.

### **Boundary changes**

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

## ENROLMENT

An electoral roll cleanse project was conducted from March until June in the following communities: Mennggen, Yarralin, Lingara, Pigeon Hole, and Timber Creek. 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 1,713 electors enrolled for Victoria Daly Regional Council.

COUNCIL	WARD	ENROLMENT
Victoria Daly Regional Council	Daguragu	421
	Milngin	368
	Pine Creek	219
	Timber Creek	409
	Walangeri	296
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,713</b>

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

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 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 East Arnhem Regional Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Tennant and District Times and 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 held in Katherine on 22 May 2017. Unfortunately, only elected members of the previous council were in attendance.

### Email and SMS

Email and SMS was used to contact 193 electors in the Victoria Daly Regional Council area who 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. There were also 307 SMSs, which provided mobile voting information, sent to Victoria Daly electors.

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 10 accepted nominations for councillor across the five wards.

The declaration of nominations took place at the NTEC Darwin office 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 Victoria Daly Regional Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Daguragu Ward Councillor (1 position)	Georgia MACLEOD
Milngin Ward Councillor (1 position)	Andrew Victor MCTAGGART
Pine Creek Ward Councillor (1 position)	Alain DENOUEL
	Phil THOMPSON
	Gaye LAWRENCE
Timber Creek Ward Councillor (1 position)	Shirley GARLETT
	Kenivan ANTHONY
	Greg KIMPTON
Walangeri Ward Councillor (1 position)	Brian PEDWELL
	Riley YOUNG

### 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 Victoria Daly Regional Council was mainly facilitated by remote voting teams; however, 24 voters chose to vote at the Katherine early voting centre

### Postal voting

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

There were 91 postal votes issued to electors within the Victoria Daly Regional Council area, and 52 (57 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 Victoria Daly 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 Victoria Daly Regional Council only.

### Number of votes issue by remote voting teams

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Amanbidji	20
Bulla	15
Gilwi	6
Kybrook Farm	23
Lingara	4
Menngen	13
Myatt	25
Pigeon Hole	32
Pine Creek	67
Timber Creek	48
Yarralin	35

## 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 scrutines

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 Victoria Daly 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 Victoria Daly Regional Council

There were 10 candidates contesting five councillor positions across five wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

#### Voter participation by ward

There were 1,713 people on the electoral roll in the Victoria Daly Regional Council area in the 2017 NT Council elections. Excluding the two wards that did not require an election a total of 924 people in the remaining three wards were required to vote. Of this, 369 people (40 per cent) voted.

WARD	ENROLMENT AT 25 JULY 2017	FORMAL VOTES	INFORMAL VOTES	TOTAL
Daguragu Ward	421	<i>Election not required</i>		
Milngin Ward	368	<i>Election not required</i>		
Pine Creek Ward	219	115	1	116
Timber Creek Ward	409	167	6	173
Walangeri Ward	296	78	2	80

#### Election of one Councillor – Daguragu Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Georgina MacLeod was elected.

#### Election of one Councillor – Milngin Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Andrew Victor McTaggart was elected.

#### Election of one Councillor – Pine Creek Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Alain DENOUEL	39
Phil THOMPSON	17
Gaye LAWRENCE	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 58.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Gaye Lawrence received the quota at count number 1

Gaye Lawrence was duly elected.



### Election of one Councillor – Timber Creek Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Shirley GARLETT	61
Kenivan ANTHONY	41
Greg KIMPTON	65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>167</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 84.

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

- Shirley Garlett received the quota at count number 2

Shirley Garlett was duly elected.

### Election of one Councillor – Walangeri Ward

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
Brian PEDWELL	59
Riley YOUNG	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 40.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Brian Pedwell received the quota at count number 1

Brian Pedwell was duly elected.

### Declaration of the results

The results were declared at the Victoria Daly Council office on Monday 4 September 2017.

### Declared results for Victoria Daly Regional Council

DAGURAGU WARD (1 VACANCY)	MILNGIN WARD (1 VACANCY)	PINE CREEK WARD (1 VACANCY)	TIMBER CREEK WARD (1 VACANCY)	WALANGERI WARD (1 VACANCY)
Georgina MacLeod	Andrew Victor McTaggart	Gaye Lawrence	Shirley Garlett	Brian Pedwell

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 Victoria Daly Regional Council to be \$26,972. Following the election, the costs are \$23,055 with a difference of \$3,917.

#### **Summary of election costs**

<b>ELECTION AREA</b>	<b>COSTS</b>
Public awareness	\$11,722
Staffing	\$3,748
Premises	\$450
Operational costs	\$7,135
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$23,055</b>

### **ISSUES OF NOTE**

#### **Receipt of nomination forms**

- In an attempt to reduce election costs the council facilitated the receipt of nomination forms. In the 2012 General elections staff in regional centres undertook this task. In 2017, staff of the Department of Housing and Community Development also played a vital role in promoting the election and assisting candidates with their nominations.

#### **Voter participation**

- The overall voter participation was disappointing in all three wards. In Pine Creek Ward turnout was 53 per cent, Timber Creek Ward the participation was at 42 per cent and in Walangeri Ward only 27 per cent of electors turned out to vote. The low turnout is reflective of voter disengagement issues amongst remote electors and raises the question of how can we improve voter engagement at future elections.

#### **Informality**

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

- In general, informality was low in all wards. A total of 9 informal votes were received across the three wards that went to an election. During the informality survey it was identified that 89 per cent were deemed unintentionally informal, of which most had duplicated numbers or were incomplete.