



Voting and counting in NT Legislative Assembly elections

Voting

NT Legislative Assembly elections use the [full preferential voting system](#) where you must show a preference for all candidates listed on the ballot paper.

You must place the number 1 in the candidate square on the ballot paper for the candidate you want as your first choice. You then must place consecutively increasing whole numbers (starting with the number 2) in the candidate square on the ballot paper for each of the other candidates until a number is placed in all candidate squares.

A ballot paper is only formal if you have indicated a first preference and consecutively numbered all squares. A number in the series may not be repeated or skipped. If one square is left blank and all other squares have been numbered in a consecutive sequence starting with the number '1', the paper is formal providing:

- the blank square is the last in the consecutive sequence; and
- there is no marking at all in the square.

Alterations to numbers will not make a ballot paper informal, provided your intention is clear, for example a number can be crossed out and another number written beside it.

Counting

The counting of votes, or 'scrutiny', begins once voting centres close at 6:00 pm on Election Day.

Votes that are cast at a voting centre on Election Day are counted on election night. Other counts may include early votes and postal votes. All ballot papers are re-checked after election night to make sure they have been counted correctly. Ballot papers not yet included in the count are also examined.

How it works

- Ballot papers are checked to ensure formality
- Informal ballot papers, those that are not completed correctly, are set aside
- The ballot papers are sorted into piles for each candidate according to the first preference marked on the ballot paper
- The number of ballot papers are then totalled for each candidate

Two-candidate preferred count

Following the first preference count, electoral officials conduct an indicative two-candidate preferred (TCP) count – a distribution of ballot papers to two selected candidates. This result is then phoned through to the NTEC and added to the results page.

The two selected candidates are those expected to receive the most first preference votes. The TCP count is conducted to give an early indication of who is most likely to win each seat, as this is not always clear from first preferences. The NTEC is required to undertake the indicative TCP count under subsections 123 (1), (2) and (3) of the [Electoral Act 2004](#).

Distribution of preferences

A candidate must receive a majority of the total formal votes in the count (i.e. 50% + 1) to be elected.

For example - if there are 4,000 formal ballot papers in the count, the absolute majority of votes is calculated as: $4,000 \div 2 = 2,000 + 1 = \mathbf{2,001}$.

If:

- a candidate has a majority of the votes, the candidate is elected and no further counting is necessary
- no candidate receives a majority, the candidate with the least number of formal votes is 'excluded' and that candidate's ballot papers are re-sorted to the candidate next in order of the voter's preferences

The process of exclusions is repeated until one candidate gains more than half of the formal votes remaining in the count and is elected.

See section 128 of the [Electoral Act 2004](#) for a more detailed explanation of how a distribution of preferences is conducted.