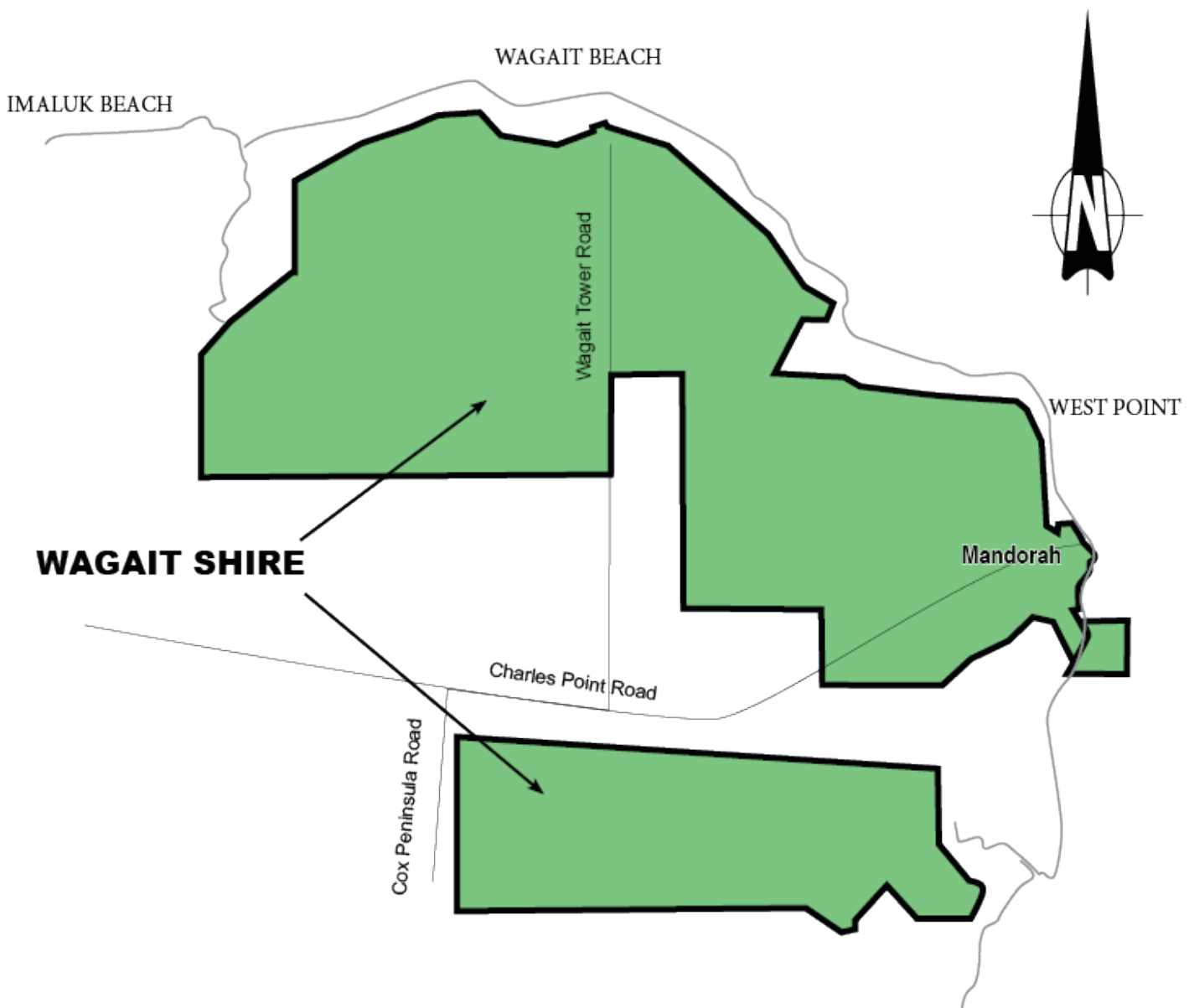




2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

WAGAIT SHIRE 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 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.
- Elizabeth West was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Wagait Shire 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 29 May 2017 and sent to the council. The document was also available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Wagait Shire Council and the NTEC was entered into on 30 March 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

Council

Wagait Shire Council consists of five elected council members.

As per the SLA, Wagait Shire Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections:

- The use of council owned premises for voting.

Boundary changes

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

ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 311 electors enrolled for the Wagait Shire Council. This was an increase of 13 per cent from 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 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 Wagait Shire Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Rural Weekly 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 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 on 18 April 2017 at the Wagait Shire Council office. This session was conducted as part of the Local Government Road Show and the NTEC portion was delivered by Wayne Harlock, Deputy Electoral Commissioner.

Email

Email was used to contact over 122 electors in the Wagait Shire 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.

VOTING SERVICES

Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 8 accepted nominations for councillor.

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 Wagait Shire Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Wagait Shire Council Councillor (5 positions)	Patricia MCINTYRE
	Jo-Anne JAMES
	Peter CLEE
	Brad IRVINE
	Katie CRANE
	Neil WHITE
	Michael VAUGHAN
	Shenagh GAMBLE

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 centres (EVCs)

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. Votes for Wagait Shire Council were taken at early voting centres across the Territory

Votes issued at NT early voting centres for Wagait Shire Council

LOCATION	VOTES
Katherine Central Shopping Centre	1
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	2
Casuarina Library	4
Darwin CBD	28

Postal voting

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

There were 18 postal votes issued for Wagait Shire Council with a total of 13 (72 per cent) admitted to the count.

Election day voting centre

Election day was Saturday 26 August with the Wagait Community Centre open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. On election day, voters could only vote within their council boundary.

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

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

Votes received for the Wagait Shire Council 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 the NTEC 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 Wagait Shire Council

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

Of the 311 people on the electoral roll in the Wagait Shire Council area a total of 236 (76 per cent) voted.

Election of five Councillors

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Patricia MCINTYRE	41
Jo-Anne JAMES	4
Peter CLEE	33
Brad IRVINE	9
Katie CRANE	14
Neil WHITE	11
Michael VAUGHAN	87
Shenagh GAMBLE	29
TOTAL	228

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 39.

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

- Michael Vaughan and Patricia McIntyre received the quota at count number 1
- Shenagh Gamble and Peter Clee received the quota at count number 2
- Neil White received the quota at count number 18

Michael Vaughan, Patricia McIntyre, Shenagh Gamble, Peter Clee and Neil White 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 Wagait Shire Council

COUNCILLORS (5 vacancies)
Michael VAUGHAN
Patricia MCINTYRE
Shenagh GAMBLE
Peter CLEE
Neil WHITE

Election costs

The SLA estimated the cost of the election for Wagait Shire Council to be \$7,738. Following the election there was no variation to the estimated costs.

Summary of election costs

Election area	Costs incurred
Public awareness	\$1,531
Staffing	\$4,488
Operational costs	\$1,719
TOTAL COSTS	\$7,738

ISSUES OF NOTE

Candidate information sessions

- Further consideration is required regarding the appropriate timing of the delivery of candidate information sessions. The session for Wagait was conducted in April which was three months prior to nominations opening. Only a small number of community members attended this session which raised concerns that it was held too early.

Nominations

- A total of six nominations were accepted; however, the majority of these were received on Thursday 3 August – the day nominations closed. Had there not been an effort by staff from the Wagait Shire Council and the Department of Housing and Community Development in contacting people that may have an interest in nominating there would likely have been a need for a supplementary election.

Council

- There are a small number of electors (311) electing a five member council in Wagait. There may be a requirement to review the structure of the council given the current system has seen a member elected with only five per cent of first preference votes.

Voter turnout

- A total of 76 per cent of eligible Wagait Shire Council electors voted on Saturday 26 August. The council decision to provide voting services from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm on election day provided voters a good opportunity to participate.

Non-voters

- A total of 56 (18 per cent) eligible electors were identified as failing to vote in the 2017 NT Council elections for the Wagait Shire Council and 15 electors provided valid and sufficient reasons as to why they were unable to vote.

Informality

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

- A total of eight informal votes were received. During the informality survey it was identified three of these were considered to be intentionally informal as they were left blank. The remaining five were considered unintentionally informal as they contained either a duplicate number or were incomplete.