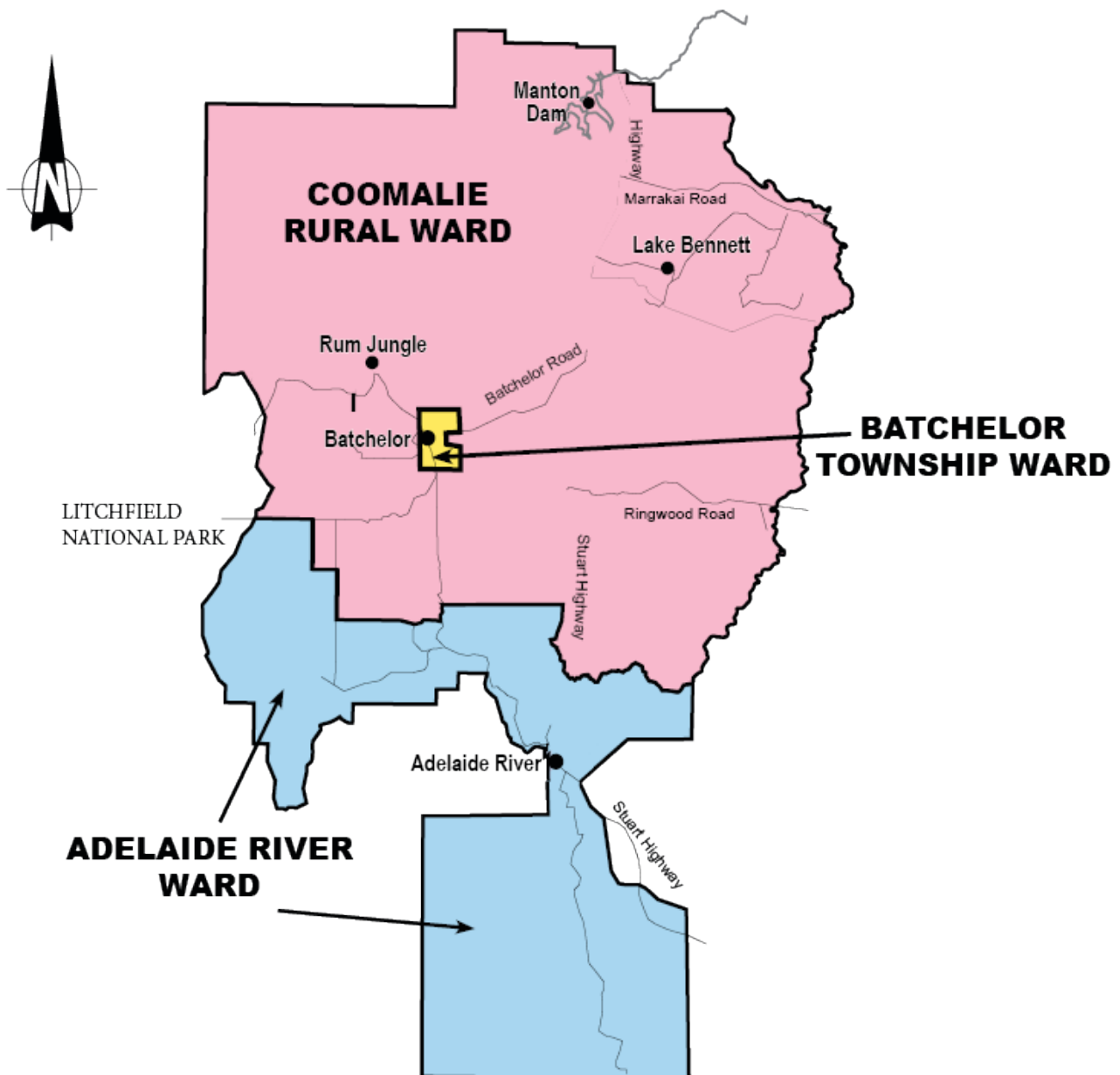




# 2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

## COOMALIE 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
<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

# INDEX

<b>BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Election .....	1
Council .....	1
Boundary changes.....	1
<b>ENROLMENT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUBLIC AWARENESS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Campaign .....	2
Website .....	2
Newsletter .....	2
Advertising – print, radio, television.....	2
Call centre .....	2
Candidate information sessions .....	3
Email and SMS .....	3
<b>VOTING SERVICES.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Nominations.....	3
Electronic voter mark-off .....	3
Early voting .....	4
Postal voting .....	4
Remote voting team .....	4
Election day voting centres .....	4
<b>ELECTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Voting .....	5
Vote counting – election night.....	5
Post-election night scrutinies.....	5
Election outcomes for Coomalie Community Government Council .....	6
Election of two Councillors – Adelaide River Ward .....	6
Election of two Councillors – Batchelor Township Ward .....	6
Election costs.....	7
<b>ISSUES OF NOTE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Planning .....	7
Remote voting .....	7
Informality.....	7

## **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.
- Susan Whyte was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Coomalie Community Government Council, 2017 NT Council elections.
- Electronic mark-off system (eLAPPS) was used at all voting centres.
- Coomalie Community Government Council were sent a breakdown of the estimated cost of the election in December 2015.
- 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 Coomalie Community Government Council and the NTEC was entered into on 21 April 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

### **Council**

Coomalie Community Government Council consists of three wards: Adelaide River Ward, Batchelor Township Ward and Coomalie Rural Ward. The council consists of six elected council members across three wards.

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

- A council building to allow for remote voting services on Friday 18 August 2017.
- Promotion of the election through social media and council sites.

### **Boundary changes**

As per the Government Gazette of 12 June 2017, Minister for Housing and Community Development, pursuant to section 9(2) of the *Local Government Act*, abolished the existing wards in the Coomalie Shire and created the following: Adelaide River Ward, Batchelor Township Ward and Coomalie Rural Ward.

The boundaries of the wards were defined as shown on Plan S2017/069 (kept at the office of the Surveyor-General) and determined that two members are to be elected for each ward.

### **ENROLMENT**

Enrolment initiatives specific to Coomalie Community Government Council included an electoral roll cleansing project that commenced in March and concluded in June. The exercise 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 614 electors enrolled for Coomalie Community Government Council. This was a 5 per cent increase on the enrolment of 584 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 in July 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 Coomalie Community Government Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections. An A-frame and additional election promotion posters were provided to council to display in the lead-up to the voting period.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in 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**

<b>ENQUIRY TYPE</b>	<b>ENQUIRY NUMBERS</b>
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 on Tuesday, 20 June 2017 with five participants attending.

In addition to the face-to-face information session, the NTEC in conjunction with LGANT, Dept. Housing and Community Development and the City of Palmerston, developed and produced a short YouTube video explaining the nomination process and candidate requirements relating to the election. This was available on the NTEC & LGANT websites.

### **Email and SMS**

An email was sent to 184 Coomalie Community Government Council electors, whom provided these details on their enrolment form, advising them of early and election-day voting centres. At 10:00 am on election day a reminder SMS was sent to 243 Coomalie Community Government Council electors who hadn't cast an early or postal vote.

## **VOTING SERVICES**

### **Nominations**

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

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 accepted nominations/candidates for Coomalie Community Government Council**

<b>POSITION</b>	<b>CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER</b>
Adelaide River Ward (2 positions)	Max CORLISS
	Maria HOLOHAN
	Sharon BESWICK
Batchelor Township Ward (2 positions)	Deborah MOYLE
	Christian Neil MCELWEE
Coomalie Rural Ward (2 positions)	Dave GRAY
	Andrew TURNER
	Sue BULMER

### **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. Early voting services were provided at the Coolalinga Shopping Complex from 14 August to 25 August 2017 (including Saturday, 19 August).

The early voting centre issued 77 votes. Votes for Coomalie Community Government Council were also issued at other early voting centres across the Territory.

#### Votes issued at NT early voting centres for Coomalie Community Government Council

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Alice Springs Council	0
Tennant Creek Civic Hall	0
Katherine Central Shopping Centre	1
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	77
Casuarina Library	8
Darwin CBD	5

### Postal voting

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

There were 22 postal votes issued for Adelaide River Ward and 25 postal votes issued for Coomalie Rural Ward. A total of 36 (77 per cent) were admitted to the count from both wards.

Postal votes admitted to the count are contained in a declaration envelope. There could be a slight difference in the numbers admitted to the count and the actual counted figure as there is no guarantee that the returned declaration envelope contained a ballot paper. Some electors who applied for a postal vote ultimately decided to vote in person

### Remote voting team

A remote voting team visited the following locations in the lead-up to election day. The voting team issued votes for Coomalie Community Government Council only.

#### Votes issued on remote voting team

REMOTE VOTING LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Adelaide River	78
Batchelor	47

The remote voting team visited Adelaide River School on Tuesday 15 August from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, and the Coomalie Council Chambers in Batchelor on Friday 18 August from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. A total of 125 votes were issued.

### Election day voting centres

Election day was Saturday 26 August. There was no election day voting centre in the Coomalie 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**

Vote counting began immediately after the close of voting at 6:00pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2016. A count of first preference votes was undertaken at each voting centre. First preference votes cast at early voting centres and remote voting teams were counted at the Darwin scrutiny centre.

### **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.

All votes received for Coomalie Community Government 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 Coomalie Community Government Council**

There were eight candidates contesting six councillor positions across three council wards. The successful candidates and votes received are detailed in tables below.

#### **Election of two Councillors – Adelaide River Ward**

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

<b>CANDIDATE</b>	<b>FIRST PREFERENCES</b>
Max Corliss	55
Maria Holohan	14
Sharon Beswick	52
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</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:

- Max Corliss and Sharon Beswick received the quota at count number 1

Max Corliss and Sharon Beswick were duly elected.

#### **Election of two Councillors – Batchelor Township Ward**

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Deborah Moyle and Christian Neil McElwee were elected.

#### **Election of two Councillors – Coomalie Rural Ward**

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

<b>CANDIDATE</b>	<b>FIRST PREFERENCES</b>
Dave Gray	29
Andrew Turner	42
Sue Bulmer	51
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>122</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:

- Sue Bulmer and Andrew Turner received the quota at count number 1

Sue Bulmer and Andrew Turner were duly elected.

### **Declared election results for Coomalie Community Government Council**

<b>Adelaide River Ward (2 vacancies)</b>	<b>Batchelor Township Ward (2 vacancies)</b>	<b>Coomalie Rural Ward (2 vacancies)</b>
Max Corliss Sharon Beswick	Deborah Moyle Christian Neil McElwee	Sue Bulmer Andrew Turner

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 Coomalie Community Government Council to be \$19,135. Following the election, the costs were \$14,693 with a difference of \$4,442. This was due to savings with staffing and printing along with Batchelor Township Ward not going to election.

### **Summary of election costs**

<b>ELECTION AREA</b>	<b>COSTS</b>
Public awareness	\$3,997
Staffing	\$7,571
Operational costs	\$3,125
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,693</b>

### **ISSUES OF NOTE**

#### **Planning**

- The initial negotiations regarding the proposed conduct of the election was undertaken with the previous CEO in March 2017. The timing of his departure and the commencement of the incoming CEO didn't allow a full review of the agreed plans and election activities.

#### **Remote voting**

- Originally only one remote voting stop was assigned to the Coomalie Government Council. Coomalie CEO requested that even though there was no election in the Batchelor Township Ward, it was viable to have a remote voting stop designated in Batchelor to accommodate the residents that work and utilise the township's facilities. An additional voting stop was included in the remote voting schedule.
- It is recommended that in future general elections an election day voting centre in Batchelor Township is established regardless of what wards are being contested.
- CEO/Coomalie Council have requested that voting days (including voting stops) are documented in the SLA. Tentative dates could be included; however, the final schedule is dependent on whether all wards go to election.

#### **Informality**

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

- A total of 11 informal votes were received. During the informality survey it was identified that 10 votes (90 per cent) were considered intentionally informal.

We would like to extend our thanks for the support received from Paul and his staff.