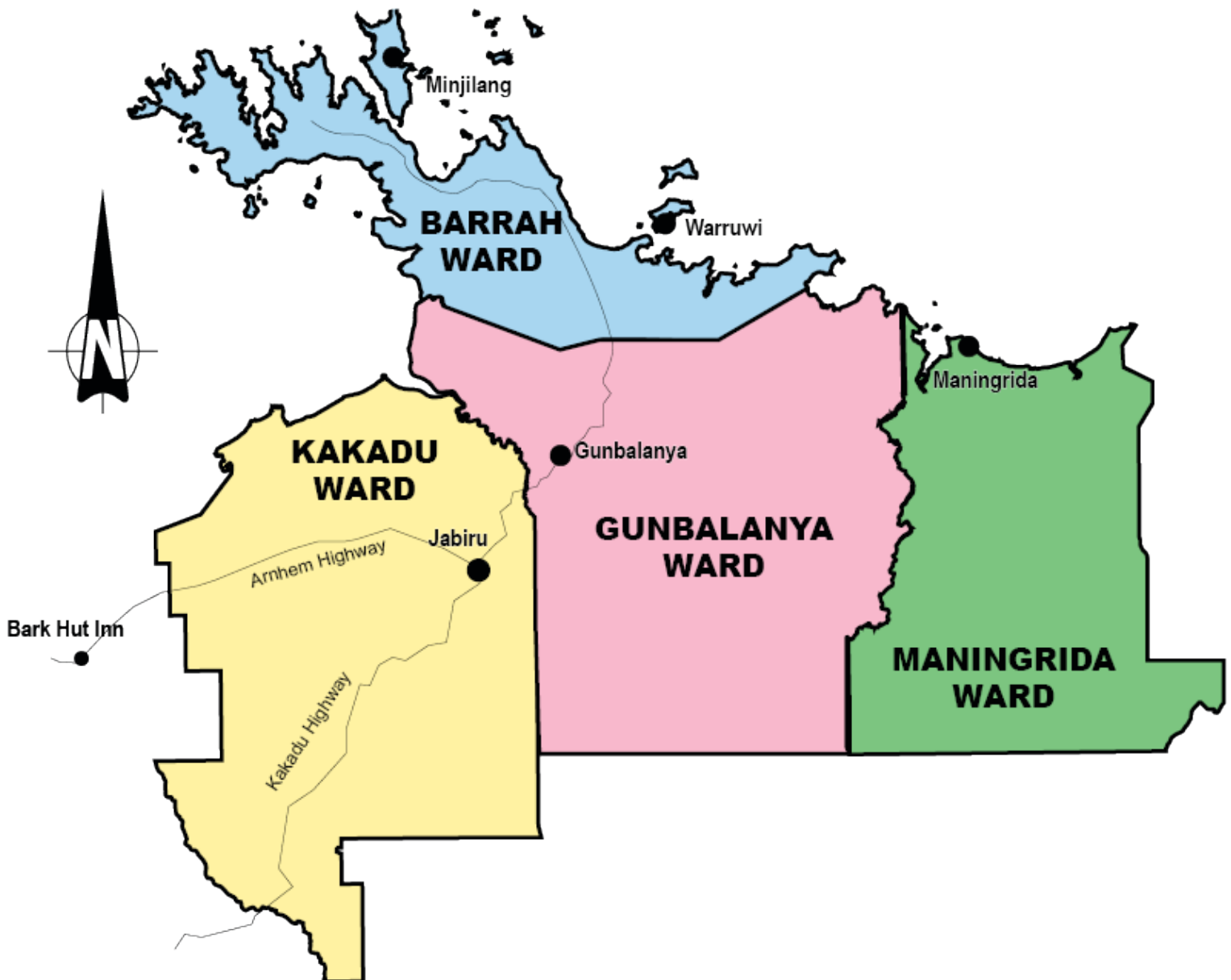




# 2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

## WEST ARNHEM 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.
- Greg Hibble was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the West Arnhem 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 sent to the council. The document was also available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the West Arnhem Regional Council and the NTEC was entered into on 11 May 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

### **Council**

West Arnhem Regional Council consists of four wards: Barrah, Gunbalanya, Kakadu and Maningrida.

The council comprises 12 elected council members. This includes two councillors from Barrah Ward, three councillors from Gunbalanya Ward, three councillors from Kakadu Ward, and four councillors from Maningrida Ward.

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

- Accommodation at no cost in Maningrida for three nights.
- Voting premises at no cost in Jabiru and Maningrida.
- Promotion of the election via council's social media outlets
- Council staff as community assistants during 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: Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Mudginberri, Patonga, and Maningrida outstations. 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 5:0 pm, there were a total of 3,720 electors enrolled for the West Arnhem Regional Council. This was an increase of 0.6 per cent from the 2012 General elections.

COUNCIL	WARD	ENROLMENT
East Arnhem Regional Council	Barrah	420
	Gunbalanya	792
	Kakadu	647
	Maningrida	1,861
	<b>TOTAL electors</b>	<b>3,720</b>

## 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 West 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 Rural Weekly 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 not held in the West Arnhem Regional Council area. However, candidate information packs were supplied to council and regional staff of the Department of Housing and Community Development to distribute to potential candidates.

### Email and SMS

Email was used to contact 358 West Arnhem Regional Council electors, who had provided these details on their enrolment form. Across the Northern Territory, 30,000 emails were sent advising electors of early and election-day voting centres. There were also 439 SMSs, which provided mobile voting information, sent to West Arnhem electors.

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 24 nominations for councillor across the four 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 West Arnhem Regional Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Barrah Ward (2 positions)	James MARRAWAL
	Daisy Nawriga YARMIRR
	Philip WASAGA
	Captain BROWN
Gunbalanya Ward Councillor (3 positions)	Karl SRDINSEK
	Otto DANN
	Davison NAWIRRIDJ
Kakadu Ward Councillor (3 positions)	Christine CHRISTOPERSEN
	Anna Elizabeth EGERTON
	Ralph F. BLYTH
	Liz WILLIAMS
	Michelle SIEBERT
Maningrida Ward Councillor (4 positions)	Matthew RYAN
	Helen WILLIAMS
	Julius Don KERNAN
	Nathan CARTER
	James WOODS
	Valda BOKMAKARRAY

### Electronic 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 West Arnhem Regional Council was facilitated by remote voting teams.

### Postal voting

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

There were 70 postal votes issued to electors within the West Arnhem Regional Council area, and 51 (73 per cent) admitted to the count.

### Election day voting centre

Election day was Saturday 26 August. In consultation with council there was an agreeance not to provide a voting service in Jabiru on election day. Voting for West Arnhem Regional Council 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 West Arnhem Regional Council only.

### Remote voting outcomes and votes issued

LOCATIONS	VOTES ISSUED
Bolkdjam	7
Buluhkaduru	5
Djirrbiyak (Whistleback Dreaming)	4
Gamardi	4
Gochan Jiny-Jirra	7
Jabiru	232
Ji-Balbal	6
Ji-Bena	4
Ji-Malawa	8
Kakadu National Park HQ	23
Maningrida	97
Marrkolidjban	0
Minjilang	22
Mudginberri	9
Mumeka	0
Patonga	2
Warruwi	86

## 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 scrutinies

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 West Arnhem 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 West Arnhem Regional Council

There were 18 candidates contesting 12 councillor positions across four wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

### Voter participation by ward

There were 3,720 people on the electoral roll in the West Arnhem Regional Council area in the 2017 NT Council elections, excluding the ward that did not require an election a total of 2,928 people in the remaining three wards were required to vote. Of this, only 706 (24 per cent) voted.

WARD	ENROLMENT AT 25 JULY 2017	FORMAL VOTES	INFORMAL VOTES	TOTAL
Barrah Ward	420	112	5	117
Gunbalanya Ward	792	<i>Voting not required</i>		
Kakadu Ward	647	312	9	321
Maningrida Ward	1,861	144	19	163



### **Election of two Councillors – Barrah Ward**

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

<b>CANDIDATE</b>	<b>FIRST PREFERENCES</b>
James MARRAWAL	76
Daisy Nawriga YARMIRR	7
Philip WASAGA	21
Captain BROWN	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 37.

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

- James MARRAWAL received the quota at count number 1
- Philip WASAGA received the quota at count number 2

James MARRAWAL and Philip WASAGA were duly elected.

### **Election of three Councillors – Gunbalanya Ward**

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Karl Srdinsek, Otto Dann and Davison Nawirridj were duly elected.

### **Election of three Councillors – Kakadu Ward**

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

<b>CANDIDATE</b>	<b>FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES</b>
Christine CHRISTOPHERSEN	22
Anna Elizabeth EGERTON	132
Ralph F. BLYTH	55
Liz WILLIAMS	59
Michelle SIEBERT	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>312</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 79.

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

- Anna Elizabeth Egerton received the quota at count number 1
- Liz Williams received the quota at count number 2
- Ralph F. Blyth received the quota at count number 4

Anna Elizabeth Egerton, Liz Williams and Ralph F. Blyth were duly elected.

### Election of four Councillors – Maningrida Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES
Matthew RYAN	91
Helen WILLIAMS	15
Julius Don KERNAN	10
Nathan CARTER	3
James WOODS	11
Valda BOKMAKARRAY	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system the quota of votes required for this election was 29.

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

- Matthew Ryan received the quota at count number 1
- Helen Williams received the quota at count number 2
- Julius Don Kernan received the quota at count number 3
- Valda Bokmakarray received the quota at count number 8

Matthew Ryan, Helen Williams, Julius Don Kernan and Valda Bokmakarray were duly elected.

### Declaration of the election results

The election results were declared at the NTEC office in Darwin at 10:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

### Declared election results for West Arnhem Regional Council

Barrah Ward (2 vacancies)	Gunbalanya Ward (3 vacancies)	Kakadu Ward (3 vacancies)	Maningrida Ward (4 vacancies)
James Marrawal Philip Wasaga	Karl Srdinsek Otto Dann Davison Nawirridj	Anna Elizabeth Egerton Liz Williams Ralph F Blyth	Matthew Ryan Helen Williams Julius Don Kernan Valda Bokmakarray

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 West Arnhem Regional Council to be \$86,202. Following the election, the costs was \$64,815 with a difference of \$21,387.

### Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$20,636
Staffing	\$8,034
Air charter	\$19,200
Operational costs	\$16,945
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,815</b>

## **ISSUES OF NOTE**

### **Voter participation**

- The continued lack of voter participation in various communities across all levels of government elections in West Arnhem is becoming a concerning matter. Having a turnout of only 21 per cent is not a healthy reflection of democracy. Further discussion is required on this issue.

### **Candidate information sessions**

- In 2017, the NTEC was unable to provide candidate information sessions across all Regional Councils, and where the agency did provide this service, it relied upon the generosity of councils to fund electoral staff to provide face-to-face candidate information sessions. Unfortunately, the NTEC was not able to provide this for West Arnhem Regional Council.
- The NTEC needs to work with Government to address this funding shortfall for future electoral events.

### **Informality**

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

- A total of 33 informal votes were received across the three wards. During the informality survey it was identified that 76 per cent were deemed unintentionally informal, of which most had duplicated numbers or hadn't completed numbers in all boxes.
- Further education and awareness may be required prior to and/or during the voting process to address the informality issue.