



Political parties in local government elections

Disclaimer: This factsheet is a general overview provided by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC). Please consult the legislation and seek independent legal advice as necessary. Unless specified otherwise, all references are to the *Local Government Act 2019* and *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021*.

Overview

Local government elections in the Northern Territory are non-partisan. Candidates independently nominate and electors vote with a ballot paper that does not reference political party affiliation.

Historically political parties have been minimally involved in Northern Territory local government elections. Political parties are not formally recognised in the local government election process, with no registration requirement and financial disclosure obligations only being placed on candidates.

However, local government candidates may be associated with political parties, including being a member of a political party, a candidate may also receive assistance from others aligned with the same party. There are no restrictions to a candidate for a local government election regarding political party membership and supports.

This factsheet provides information for political parties ahead of any local government elections.

Campaign material and campaigning

In local government elections, candidates run as independents. Campaign material and campaigning should clearly reflect that voters are choosing an individual, not a party, to avoid misleading or confusing electors.

Campaign materials should not present candidates as being the representative of a political party or acting on behalf of the party. As a result, the following campaign material activities would be deemed as misleading voters:

- Using phrases such as "John Smith, Sample Party candidate for the City of Darwin"
- Stating "A vote for John Smith is a vote for the Sample Party."
- Creating multi-candidate advertisements that promote 'the candidates from the Sample Party'

While it is discouraged, there is no prohibition on using party colours, however party branding and logos cannot be used on campaign materials.

There is no prohibition on candidates disclosing their membership of a political party. For example, they may include a statement on their campaign material, such as '*John Smith is a member of the Sample Party.*'

Campaigners are not prohibited from distributing campaign materials while wearing generic party t-shirts. A candidate must not wear party t-shirts whilst campaigning and during the election period.

Authorisations

Campaign material must be authorised. See the *Authorisation of campaign material* factsheet for further information and exceptions.

Financial Disclosure

Candidates must disclose any donations, including gifts-in-kind, of \$200 or more they receive from a single donor or a loan of \$1,500 or more (unless from an Authorised deposit-taking institution). Candidates are not required to disclose their campaign expenditure.

For example, a candidate must declare as part of their gift return if a political party pays for campaign material for them at a cost of \$200 or more.

Gifts-in-kind include providing a service for no payment or inadequate payment. However, note if volunteer labour is provided by a person outside the person's normal working hours or while the person is on leave, and they are not remunerated, this is not considered as a declarable gift-in-kind.

There is no requirement for donor returns in Northern Territory local government elections.

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1.1	March 2026	Chris Brack, Financial Disclosure and Compliance Manager	Removed the 2025 Local Government Election mention.