



**NORTHERN  
TERRITORY  
ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION**

## **Annual Report 2008 - 2009**

*EVERY vote counts!*

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The Hon. Jane Aagaard MLA  
Speaker  
Northern Territory Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
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Madam Speaker

I am pleased to provide the sixth Annual Report of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

The report details the performance, key achievements and outlook for the Commission for the year ending 30 June 2009. It has been prepared in accordance with the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* and the *Financial Management Act 2003*.

Additional copies have been provided for tabling the report in the Legislative Assembly within three sitting days after its receipt.

**Bill Shephard**  
Electoral Commissioner

30 October 2009



## ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

The Financial Year 2008-09 turned out to be incredibly busy for the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC). In my many years working in the electoral field, I am not aware of any electoral administration that has had to face so many major events in such a short space of time.

At the commencement of the financial year, the NTEC was still dealing with post-poll activities and reporting associated with the Municipal General Elections held in March 2008. The 2008 Redistribution of Legislative Assembly boundaries had just been completed and the onerous and time consuming task of the realignment of boundaries and reassignment of electors to those new boundaries had only recently been commenced. In addition, the preparation of last year's annual report for the agency was also receiving its due attention at that particular time.



Photo: Bill Shephard

The calling of the 2008 Legislative Assembly General Election with little warning in July, for one of the very earliest possible polling dates, had a significant impact on the agency's forward planning. The holding of the inaugural General Elections for the rural/remote Shires in October 2009, hard on the heels of the Legislative Assembly election, added further to the operational congestion and placed an incredible strain on the NTEC's small staff numbers.

The successful completion of the various operational tasks this year says a lot about the dedication and endurance of both the small core group of NTEC staff and the support staff provided by other agencies inside and outside of the NT Public Service. In this context, the NTEC is particularly indebted to the Department of Business and Employment and the Australian, Tasmanian and Victorian Electoral Commissions for their support during the major elections held this financial year.

Of course, the NTEC's activities this year were not restricted to the major electoral events mentioned above. Apart from the general elections and redistribution, the NTEC's body of work included:

- Conduct of 5 council by-elections and 5 fee-for-service elections;
- Provision of pre-polling facilities for 15 elections for other jurisdictions under reciprocal arrangements;
- Provision of 29 education sessions to school and community groups;
- Establishment of a joint office in Alice Springs with the Australian Electoral Commission on new premises;
- Review and revamping of the NTEC website;
- Acquisition and installation of modern counting software;
- Significant contributions to a number of working parties and forums associated with the Australian Electoral Commission and Electoral Council of Australia; and
- Development of public awareness models and materials to support election advertising and publicity.

It has indeed been a most challenging year and, as a consequence, I want to publicly convey my thanks and congratulations to the staff members of the Commission for the extraordinary commitment and resilience they have displayed during those very demanding times.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Shephard'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a dotted line.

**Bill Shephard**  
Electoral Commissioner

30 October 2009



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# **1. THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

## **1.1 Purpose and Functions**

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) commenced operations on 15 March 2004, following assent to the *Electoral Act 2004* (the Act).

The NTEC provides an independent, professional and accessible electoral service to the people of the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and various client groups, including municipal and shire councils and other organisations.

The functions of the Commission are prescribed under section 309 of the Act. The Commission is required to maintain electoral rolls, conduct elections and promote public awareness of election matters. It provides information and advice on election matters to the Legislative Assembly and Members, the Executive Council, Cabinet, political parties, candidates and Territory authorities. The Commission also conducts research and publishes material relating to elections and other related functions and conducts ballots for persons and organisations.

The Electoral Commissioner sits on both the Redistribution and the Augmented Redistribution Committees, which review and determine electoral boundaries for the Legislative Assembly.

## **1.2 Vision, Mission and Values**

The vision of the NTEC is to be recognised widely for its expertise and performance excellence in electoral administration.

To achieve this vision, its mission is to provide high quality and accessible electoral services that are fair and impartial, effective, efficient and in accordance with the law.

The following corporate values are considered vital to our success:

- Integrity;
- Impartiality;
- Transparency and accountability;
- Commitment to high standards of service delivery;
- Commitment to continuous improvement; and
- Respect for the law.

## **1.3 Challenges for the Commission**

The Commission's ongoing challenges are to:

- Provide an appropriate level of service to a small, culturally diverse, dispersed and mobile population;
- Work impartially in a politically sensitive environment;
- Implement a broad charter and complementary governance structure for the Commission;
- Manage and support a small permanent staff resource to meet the demands of electoral events with heavy operational requirements;
- Work productively with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), interstate electoral authorities and other organisations; and
- Meet the increasing requirements of elections and by-elections, especially in relation to local government elections.

## 1.4 Legislative Base

The following Acts and Regulations are administered by the NTEC:

- *Electoral Act 2004*;
- Electoral Regulations 2004;
- *Referendums Act 2001*; and
- Referendums Regulations 2003.

The NTEC recommended in its report on the 2005 Legislative Assembly elections, tabled in May 2007, a review of a number of provisions in the Act as a result of issues arising during the 2005 election, as well as practical considerations to improve electoral processes and procedures.

An Electoral Amendment Bill was introduced into the NT Parliament on 26 November 2008. The Bill was passed 11 February 2009 and received assent and became effective 12 March 2009. The amendments focused on set term elections by:

- Establishing fixed four year terms for elections on the fourth Saturday in August every four years - the next LA elections are scheduled to be held 25 August 2012;
- Providing that nomination day is four days after the issue of the writ;
- Providing for the issuing of postal votes as soon as possible after the close of nominations, allowing an extension of one day in the time for postal vote mail-out; and
- Increasing the election timetable by one day.

In accordance with provisions of the *Local Government Act 2008* and the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations, the Electoral Commission is required to provide rolls for local government elections and councils must consult with the Commission in carrying out a review of electoral representation. Also, the Electoral Commissioner may, by Gazette notice, give directions to returning officers about any aspect of the local government electoral process.

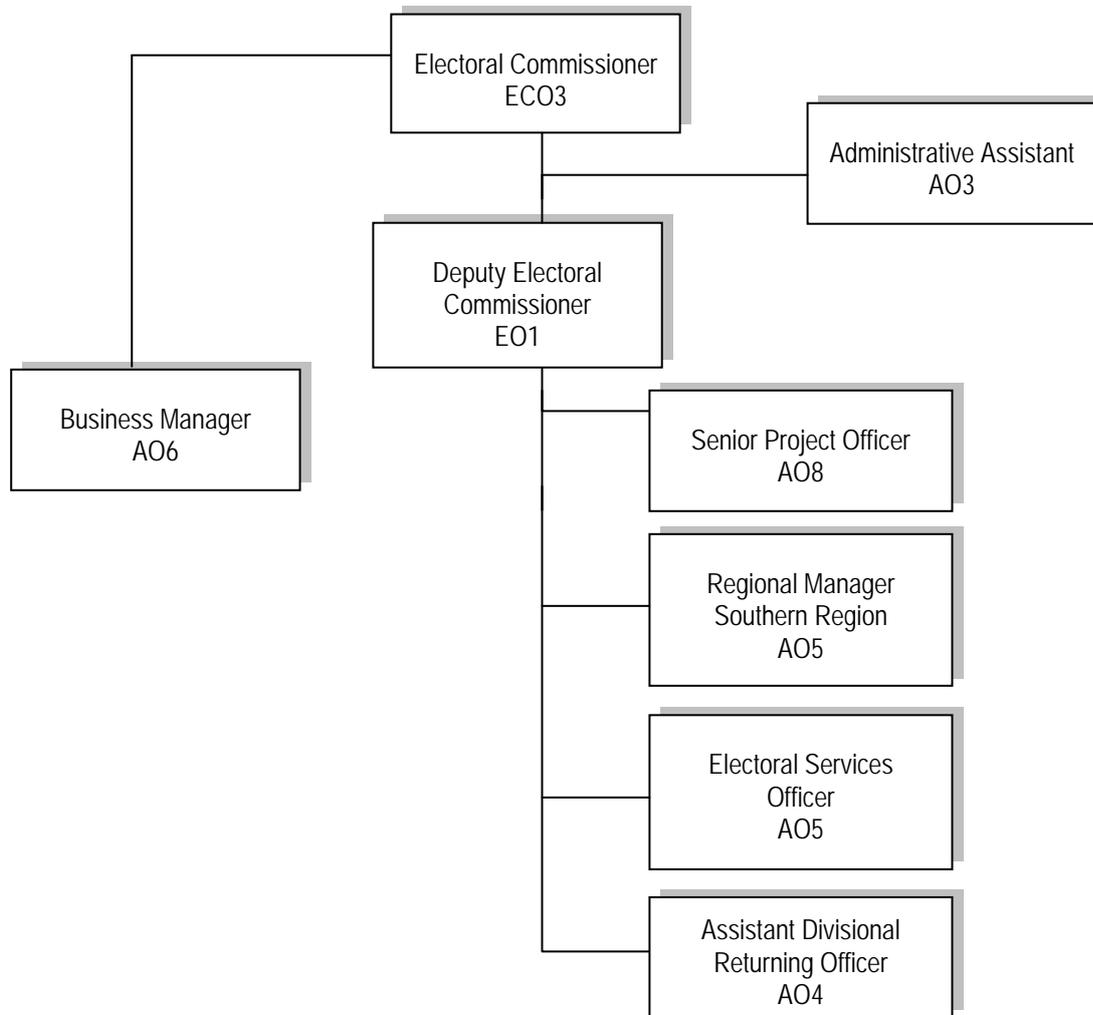
## 1.5 Strategic Planning

Outcomes for 2008-09 are reported against the Key Result Areas (KRAs) set out in the NTEC Corporate Plan 2007-2011.

The KRAs, as used in the framework for this Annual Report, are:

- Enrolment;
- Education and Information;
- Elections; and
- Corporate Support.

## 1.6 Organisational Structure and Staffing at 30 June 2009



**Table 1: NTEC staffing profile as at 30 June 2008 and 2009**

Designation	Number of Staff (Including Contract)	
	30 June 2009	30 June 2008
Executive Contract Officer 3	1	1
Executive Officer 1	1	1
Administrative Officer 8	4	2
Administrative Officer 7	0	1
Administrative Officer 6	1	1
Administrative Officer 5	1	1
Administrative Officer 4	1	1
Administrative Officer 3	2	2.5
Administrative Officer 2	1	0
Administrative Officer 1 (part time)	0.4	0.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12.4 FTE</b>	<b>10.7 FTE</b>

At 30 June 2009 the NTEC had 12.4 FTE employees (10.7 FTE at 30 June 2008), including the Electoral Commissioner. The permanent and contract staff levels of the NTEC fluctuate significantly in accordance with work being undertaken in respect to the preparation for and conduct of electoral events.

## **1.7 National Representation**

The Commissioner is a member of the Electoral Council of Australia (ECA), a consultative council of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Electoral Commissioners and other senior electoral officials from the Commonwealth. It met quarterly where possible during the reporting period, including prior to the state general elections held in Western Australia in September 2008 and Queensland in March 2009.

The Commissioner also participated in a separate association of State and Territory Electoral Commissioners (STEC). This body meets prior to ECA meetings to discuss matters specific to States and Territories, to formalise existing cooperative activities and sponsor and engage in special STEC projects at the State/Territory level.

## **1.8 Partnership with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)**

The NT Electoral Commission maintains a close working relationship with the NT office of the AEC regarding the operation of enrolment and public awareness activities in the Territory. Senior officers of both Commissions met during 2008-09 regularly to plan and report on electoral program delivery.

During the reporting period, the AEC provided a high level of support to the NTEC for enrolment, public awareness and election operations for the Legislative Assembly election and rural council elections held in the second half of 2008.

## 1.9 Progress - Major Tasks Identified in 2007-08 Annual Report

Task	Progress
Complete the encoding of rural council boundaries and undertake data integrity checks.	Completed in September 2008, prior to the commencement of the rural council elections.
Complete the timely processing of close of roll enrolments and supply of roll products for the 2008 LA election and rural council elections.	The NTEC and AEC completed all close of roll processing on time and roll products were supplied as specified.
Undertake public awareness, education and enrolment activities in support of the LA and rural council elections.	All public awareness and promotion activities were undertaken in accordance with the NTEC's communications strategy. Activities included the publication of statutory notices, advertising, updating the NTEC website and operating the call centre.
Review and execute programs for the LA elections.	With the calling of the LA election in July 2008, the NTEC implemented its programs for the conduct of all aspects of the election. Non-voter action arising was finalised in June 2009.
Develop and implement plans for the inaugural rural council elections.	The NTEC managed the elections for the new rural councils and Litchfield municipality in October 2008 in accordance with the legislation. It subsequently conducted five rural council by-elections by the end of June 2009.
Conduct enterprise ballots, fee-for-service elections and parliamentary elections for other jurisdictions.	The NTEC conducted one industrial ballot and four elections for other organisations. Voting facilities were provided for 15 electoral events for interstate jurisdictions and New Zealand.
Review staff development.	<p>All polling official manuals, including training manuals, were reviewed and updated for use at the LA and council elections and by-elections.</p> <p>The NTEC also has internal staff rotation, released staff to attend external training courses and conducted internal training courses in respect to specialised electoral support tools and systems.</p>
Relocate the Alice Springs office.	The establishment of the new office was substantially complete at June 2009, with the full transfer of functions expected early in 2009-10.

## **1.10 Noteworthy Events in the 2008-09 Reporting Year**

- The Legislative Assembly elections (9 August 2008);
- The inaugural shire and rural council elections (25 October 2008);
- The conduct of five shire by-elections and support for one other (December 2008-June 2009);
- The development of a series of templates and materials for use at by-elections;
- The introduction of updated software for multiple vacancy exhaustive preferential counts (October 2008);
- A significant expansion of the electoral education program;
- The conduct of an industrial ballot and four fee-for-service elections;
- Provision of polling facilities for 14 inter-jurisdiction general and by-elections and one referendum;
- Completion of a review of procurement and human resource procedures;
- An audit compliance review (March 2009); and
- Completion of arrangements for the relocation of the Alice Springs office.

## **1.11 Looking to the Future 2009-10**

The following tasks are expected to feature on the Commission's agenda for 2009-10:

- Finalisation of reports into the 2008 Legislative Assembly and the rural council general elections;
- Provision of advice in any reviews of the Electoral and Referendums Acts and local government electoral provisions;
- Development of an integrated enrolment, education and election plan to take into account the new fixed four year election cycle;
- Continued refinement of documentation and advertising templates for the conduct of by-elections;
- Finalisation of the redevelopment of the NTEC website;
- Development of new electoral education and public awareness materials;
- Involvement with other Commissions on a project seeking to develop on-line training modules for polling staff;
- Establishment of staff and services at the new electoral services centre in Alice Springs; and
- Investigation of suitable division names and the acquisition of redistribution software for the next redistribution of electoral boundaries.

## **2. ENROLMENT**

### **Objective – Outcome**

A complete, accurate and securely maintained roll of eligible Northern Territory electors that meets the requirements of stakeholders.

#### **2.1 Joint Rolls Arrangement**

The Joint Roll Arrangement (JRA) between the Governor General and the Administrator of the Northern Territory provides for a single enrolment form for Territory and Commonwealth purposes and the maintenance of the roll by the AEC.

The NTEC has on-line access to the national roll database (RMANS) and provides the AEC with geographic and elector information useful for roll maintenance. The AEC is responsible for processing enrolments and the review of the roll, including the removal from the roll by objection of those electors who have apparently left their enrolled address. The NTEC undertakes complementary enrolment stimulation activities, collects enrolment forms directly from the public in community settings and at elections and passes the forms to the AEC for data entry.

Senior officers of both Commissions meet regularly to monitor performance and report on local service delivery, planning and any emerging roll maintenance issues in the Territory. The senior officers also oversee the management of the Continuous Roll Update (CRU) program as set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between the NTEC and the AEC's NT office.

#### **2.2 Supply of Roll Data**

In accordance with the JRA, the AEC extracted roll data from RMANS during the reporting period to meet a range of NTEC requirements, including:

- The Legislative Assembly (LA) general election rolls (August 2008) and post election reports for the processing of voter and non-voter data;
- Statistics to support the application of electoral boundaries in August 2008 for the eight newly created rural councils and Coomalie shire;
- The rural council general election rolls (September 2008);
- Rolls for six rural council by-elections held between December 2008 and June 2009;
- Jury rolls;
- Monthly updates of roll changes for supply to Members of the Legislative Assembly and registered parties; and
- The supply of roll data to approved entities for health screening programs.

The AEC managed the close of rolls for NT elections and supplied roll products to the NTEC during the reporting period in accordance with the performance standards set out in the JRA. Certified list and postal voter data for the LA and rural council elections was extracted and supplied to the NTEC against short deadlines. The AEC also processed roll information to allow staff to process non-voter data on RMANS terminals in the NTEC's Darwin office.

## 2.3 Roll Review

The accuracy of the electoral roll is maintained in accordance with the joint CRU program. The program includes community based enrolment stimulation activities, the mailing of enrolment reminder and roll review letters and the checking of enrolments at individual addresses by field officers. Aside from direct enrolment stimulation activities undertaken at public events, the CRU program was restricted to the period November 2008 to June 2009 due to the LA and rural council elections. During the reporting period, CRU activities included the following:

- Mailing of 22 000 enrolment reminder and roll review letters to NT addresses based on change of address information provided by government agencies and address data extracted from RMANS;
- Mailing in December 2008 of 1800 enrolment reminder letters to school leavers with their Year 12 results and regular mailing of 'birthday card' enrolment letters to students and apprentices on their 17th birthday;
- Objection processing to remove 940 electors from the roll following the receipt of information that they had left their enrolled address e.g. unclaimed official mail;
- The processing of information, including enrolments and non-voter data, provided by the NTEC arising from the 2008 LA and council elections; and
- Audit fieldwork at 6500 addresses in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs to check the accuracy of the roll.

The CRU mailing was sourced from data provided by federal agencies and the NT's Department of Education and Training, the Power and Water Corporation and the Motor Vehicle Registry. Name and address data is supplied by NT agencies for roll review purposes under the demand powers of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. Separate demand powers allow on-line access by the AEC to NT motor licence data held on NEVDIS (the national licence data base) to make enrolment Proof of Identity (POI) checks.

## 2.4 Enrolment Stimulation Activities

The NTEC engages the community with direct enrolment stimulation to complement the CRU program. During the reporting period the NTEC directly managed or worked jointly with the AEC in the following activities:

- Electoral education presentations to primary and secondary school students;
- Enrolment stalls and expos at shopping centres, markets and defence establishments;
- Public awareness and enrolment activities at major community events including NT shows;
- Specific public awareness and advertising activities conducted prior to the 2008 general elections for the Legislative Assembly and rural councils, including subsequent advertising for council by-elections conducted by the NTEC in 2009;
- An electoral awareness and enrolment program in remote areas of the Territory; and
- Maintenance of statistics for the evaluation and reporting of enrolment programs.

During 2008-09 the NTEC collected an estimated 600 enrolment forms at 27 enrolment and information displays staged at community events and shopping centres and prior to the LA election. A further 900 forms were collected as part of an awareness campaign targeted at new Territory residents that was undertaken jointly with the AEC in February 2009. The campaign included advertising and the staffing of enrolment stalls at Coonawarra, Robertson and Tindal defence establishments and other community settings.

## **2.5 Election Rolls**

### **2008 Legislative Assembly Election**

At the close of rolls on 24 July, there were 119 814 electors enrolled for the 2008 LA election, an increase of 7% on enrolment at the 2005 election. Whilst the 2008 election was called at one of the earliest possible dates, the NTEC already had an enrolment program underway in public places and events during the weeks before the issue of the writ and an enrolment advertising campaign commenced immediately on the announcement. During the three days to the close of rolls, an additional 2000 enrolment forms were received. Over the 12 months preceding the LA election, there were 7948 net additions to the roll, mainly arising from enrolments at the 2007 federal election and March 2008 NT municipal elections. However, the protracted objection process over the same period limited the number of electors removed from the roll who were apparently no longer resident at their enrolled address and this had a major impact on participation at the election.

### **Rural Council Elections**

At the close of rolls on 23 September, there were 39 003 electors enrolled for the rural council general elections. Prior to the election, the NTEC and councils undertook an enrolment advertising campaign that resulted in the receipt of 249 enrolments in the close of rolls period. At the time of polling, staff collected a further 740 enrolment forms, mostly for transfer of electors' enrolled address across ward boundaries. Staff also received notification that many residents in remote communities had temporarily or permanently left their enrolled address.

It was apparent that the quality of the roll contributed to the relatively low participation rate. In many of the smaller communities visited by mobile polling teams, staff reported that there was a very high turnout of those electors who were on location but many electors appeared not to be residing there at the time of polling. The participation across all councils at the election averaged 49.7%. A survey undertaken at the Iyarrka Ward (MacDonnell Shire) by-election in December 2008 indicated that 30% of the 637 enrolled electors had moved, mainly to Alice Springs, highlighting the difficulties of maintaining the roll in remote areas, especially in the context of the high mobility between remote and regional locations.

## **2.6 Enrolment Transactions**

At 30 June 2009 there were 119 608 electors on the NT roll, an increase of 650 or 0.5%, during the reporting period. Enrolment activity generated by a major campaign undertaken by the AEC in 2007-08 plus enrolments arising from the 2007 federal election and the 2008 municipal elections led to reduced roll transactions in 2008-09. The result was a small overall increase in roll numbers and a 50% decline in enrolment forms received in 2008-09 compared to the previous year. Also notable in this context is that, due to the timing of the 2008 LA and rural council elections, CRU activities and enrolment field work in remote communities could only be re-commenced in early 2009.

The NT roll will be subject to downward adjustment early in 2009-10. This is due to the culmination of accumulated objection action expected to remove approximately 3200 electors from the rolls, mainly in urban divisions, on the ground that they have permanently left their enrolled address.

In early 2007, the AEC modified its policy regarding the processing of objections. As the enrolment and voting rights of NT electors are inextricably linked by law to Commonwealth entitlement, the policy therefore had a direct and unavoidable impact on the NT roll. The AEC modifications effectively delayed the removal from the NT roll of many electors who had left their address without transferring their enrolment. Additional time was provided by the AEC to enable elector follow-up at any new address that it had obtained as part of CRU data-matching. This modification in policy significantly increased the turnaround time taken to remove electors from the roll for their old address, should they not enrol in response to the CRU letter sent to the new address. The longer objection cycle, combined with the limited time available to action removals

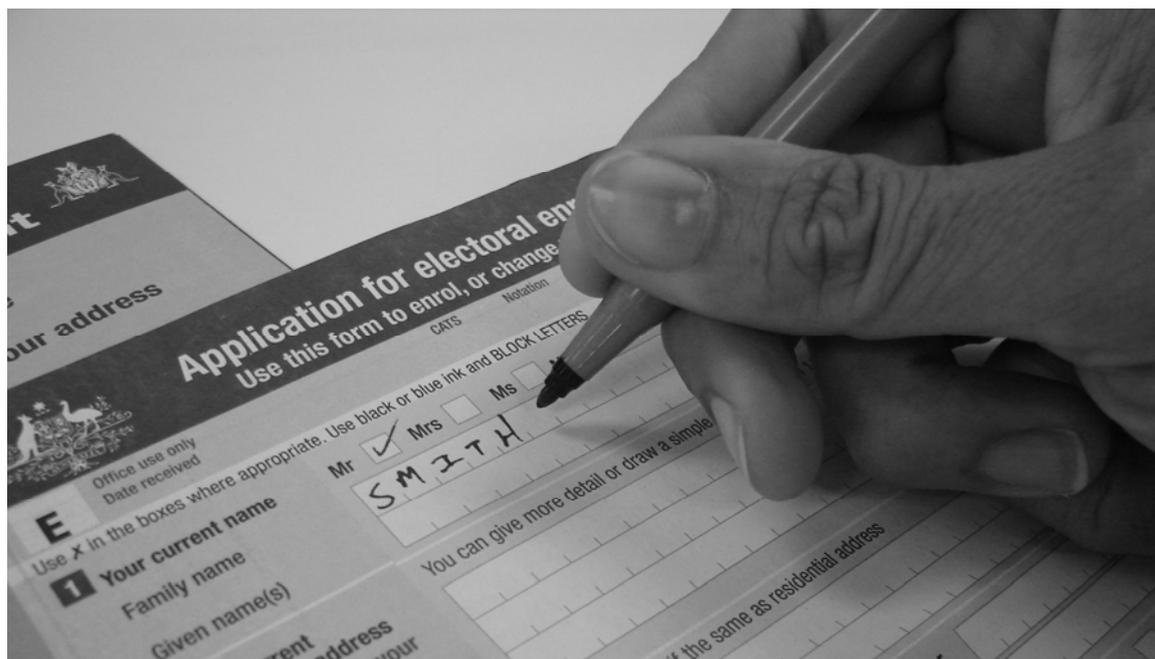
between elections over the period November 2007 to December 2008, resulted in a significant reduction in annual removals.

The retention of these electors reduced the quality of the Territory roll and negatively affected the raw participation rate (i.e. no. of voters/ no. of enrolled electors) at the LA and municipal and shire council elections. Similar outcomes arising from the more protracted actioning of objections have also been experienced in the raw participation rates reported at elections in other State/Territory jurisdictions since the AEC's policy modification.

Comparative statistics on enrolment transactions are provided in Table 2.

Whilst transfers and amendments do not increase the number of electors on the Territory roll, they are as important as additions (new electors) in maintaining the accuracy of LA and council rolls. During 2008-09 there were approximately 7500 transfers of address and 1000 amendments to current enrolments, a 20% decline on transactions in the previous year.

The main stimuli to enrolment have been electoral events including federal elections in 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2007, a federal referendum in 1999 and Territory elections in 2001, 2005 and 2008. Elections boost enrolment but are followed by a relative decline, due in part to post election deletions from the roll and the scaling down of enrolment programs. Total enrolment has not declined in 2008-09, due to the continuing receipt of enrolment forms, the growth in the NT population and the deferral of objection action to delete electors from the roll.



Picture: Enrolment form

Table 2: Enrolment transactions – Additions, deletions and transfers since 2006-2007

Enrolment at Start of Financial Year	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
		110 330		112 313		118958
Plus - Additions to the Roll						
New Enrolments	3 266		4 358		2 203	
Re-enrolments	2 923		4 698		1 010	
Re-instatements	176		83		11	
Interstate transfers to NT	6 020		6 792		4 724	
<b>Total Additions</b>		<b>+12 385</b>		<b>+15 931</b>		<b>+7 948</b>
No change to enrolment total Transfers within NT						
Transfers between LA Divisions	5 907		8 388		5 184	
Changes within LA Division	3 148		4421		2284	
Amendment to elector details	1175		2938		1086	
Total Transfers	10 230		15 747		8 554	
Less - Deletions to the Roll						
Removal by objection	3 135		2 321		940	
Deaths	795		837		745	
Duplications	115		149		54	
Interstate Transfers from NT	6 359		5 981		5 558	
<b>Total Deletions</b>		<b>-10 404</b>		<b>-9 288</b>		<b>-7 297</b>
Net Adjustments		+2		+2		-1
<b>Enrolment at Close of Financial Year</b>		<b>112 313</b>		<b>118 958</b>		<b>119 608</b>

Notes:

- **New enrolments** – all electors who enrolled for the first time.
- **Re-enrolments** - re-enrolling electors who previously had been enrolled.
- **Re-instatements** – the re-instatement of electors to the roll removed previously based on the receipt of new information that they still reside at their earlier enrolled address.
- **Interstate transfers to NT** - interstate transfers of enrolment to an NT address.
- **Interstate transfers from NT** - electors previously enrolled in the NT who transfer their enrolment to another jurisdiction.
- **Transfers within NT** – electors notifying a change of address to another NT LA division or within same division. Transfers within NT do not alter total enrolment.
- **Amendment** – changes to enrolment details other than name or enrolled address e.g. amendment to mail delivery address, council re-numbering of street addresses.
- **Removed by objection** - electors removed from the roll generally on the ground that they are apparently no longer resident at their enrolled address.
- **Duplication** – removal of a duplicate entry on the roll due to an elector or official error e.g. a transfer of enrolment not matched to an existing enrolment.
- **Provisional enrolment** - includes electors who enrol when they are 17 and obtain full enrolment and voting rights on their 18th birthday.
- **Adjustments** – variations to statistics arising from processing amendments.

## 2.7 The Impact of Commonwealth Amendments to the NT Roll

In mid 2006, changes to the enrolment provisions of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (CEA) were passed by federal parliament. In accordance with section 14 of the Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978, the federal provisions apply to enrolment in the NT. The changes included the requirement for enrollees to include proof of identity (POI) details on the enrolment form, the removal of voting rights from prisoners (subsequently overturned by the High Court) and the introduction of demand powers on Territory agencies for the supply of data for POI and roll review purposes (commenced in April 2007).

### Enrolment Proof of Identity (POI)

Since 16 April 2007, applicants have been required to provide POI at time of enrolment by:

- quoting their driver's (MV) licence number on the enrolment form; or if they do not have a licence
- proving their identity by showing another prescribed ID document to a witness from a prescribed group; or if no prescribed form of ID is held
- their enrolment can be witnessed by two enrolled persons who have known the applicant for one month.

There is no evidence that applicants for enrolment with a current MV licence have been particularly inconvenienced by the change, other than the need to complete a considerably more complicated form. However, the significant number of eligible persons in the NT who do not have an MV licence (estimated at 15 – 20%), mostly residing in remote areas, need to turn to providing other forms of official proof of identity to an approved witness to enrol or have two witnesses attest to their claim for enrolment.

Prior to the 2008 LA and rural council elections, special arrangements were put in place to have AEC and NTEC staff in the field and at public venues to witness forms and, at the council elections, shire staff witnessed forms. Outside of elections, these arrangements are not always practical.

### Commonwealth Proposals to Amend Legislation Relating to Enrolment

Any change to enrolment procedures for Territory purposes is dependent on changes at the federal level. The Prime Minister wrote to the Premiers and Chief Ministers seeking their cooperation to progress changes to enrolment provisions by contributing towards the drafting of a green paper on the matter. At 30 June 2009 the green paper had not been made public but it has subsequently been published.

The Report on the Conduct of the 2007 Federal Election by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) was released on 22 June 2009. The JSCEM Report made wide ranging recommendations for changes to provisions of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* relating to enrolment, which would effectively apply for NT purposes. The more significant of these recommendations include the following:

- POI be required for each elector once only in their life and that the prescribed witness, if needed, can be another person on the roll;
- The address details of an enrolled elector can be altered on the basis of written information provided by the elector, without the need to complete a fresh enrolment form or provide POI;
- Currently enrolled electors be able to update their enrolment details via a dedicated AEC website provided they can provide sufficient identity information in the absence of a signature;
- The AEC be allowed to update the roll directly using information provided by an elector to another approved agency, subject to conditions including the adequacy of identity checks by the approved agency and the specific consent of the elector; and
- That legislation be amended to change the minimum age for provisional enrolment from 17 to 16 years of age.

The JSCEM stated that it recognised that decisions about enrolment eligibility at a state level are a matter for their respective parliaments and further, that cooperation and coordination between the AEC and the various electoral authorities is important to deliver electoral services in a cost effective manner. It recommended that the Australian Government enter into discussions with the State and Territory

governments with a view to achieving a harmonised enrolment regime for the purposes of Commonwealth and state/territory enrolments.

## **Funding for Aboriginal Electoral Education**

The JSCEM recommended that the Australian Government provide funding to establish a program similar in purpose to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Electoral Information Service (ATSEIS) to provide ongoing engagement with indigenous electors. ATSEIS and similar programs operated from the late 1970's to 1996.

In advance of the release of the JSCEM Report, provision was made in the 2009 federal budget of \$13 million over four years to establish and operate an Aboriginal electoral education service. It is anticipated that the new program would be able to make good use of the electoral services centre in Alice Springs.

## **2.8 Redistribution - Electoral Boundary Reviews**

Periodic redistributions of electorate boundaries are undertaken in all Australian jurisdictions in accordance with the relevant legislation and are carried out by independent commissions or local government boundary adjustment panels and boards.

### **Redistribution of Legislative Assembly Boundaries**

The redistribution of NT Legislative Assembly boundaries takes place under Part 8 of the Act and Section 13(4) of the Commonwealth *Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978*. They are undertaken by a Redistribution Committee made up of the Electoral Commissioner (Chairperson), the Auditor General and the Surveyor General. Following publication of the proposed boundaries, the Augmented Redistribution Committee is formed, comprising members of the Redistribution Committee plus a new chairperson appointed by the Administrator.

The last redistribution of NT Legislative Assembly electoral boundaries was gazetted on 16 June 2008. NTEC and AEC staff completed the application of the new boundaries to the electronic roll (RMANS) in mid July and they became effective at the 2008 LA general election.

The 2008 redistribution cost \$205 440 over two financial years of which \$178 527 was expended in 2007-08 and \$26 913 in 2008-09. As the NTEC is an independent agency, all redistribution costs are identified and attributable to the Commission, including charges by other agencies for the provision of technical support and materials.

The NTEC provided assistance to the redistribution committees by seconding two staff for six months to provide administrative support, supplying specialised IT reports and maps showing up-to-date enrolment data and dedicating a section of the NTEC's website to facilitate public access to statutory notices, submissions, maps and reports.

Section 138 of the Act requires that the next redistribution be held as soon as practicable two years and six months after the polling day for a general election. As the last Legislative Assembly election was held on 9 August 2008, the next redistribution must commence in early February 2011.

### **Application of Local Government Boundaries to the Roll**

Details of eleven new shire councils were gazetted on 30 June 2008. The application of the ward boundaries for Coomalie and the eight remote shire councils to RMANS by NTEC and AEC staff commenced forthwith and was completed on 12 September 2008.

The final application of rural council boundaries to the roll resulted in NT local government and ward details being available for the first time on RMANS for all addresses and localities in the Territory, including unincorporated areas. The NTEC and AEC look forward to a collaborative relationship with NT councils for the supply of the up-to-date address information required for the maintenance of their rolls.

## **2.9 Targets 2009-10**

- Increase NTEC involvement in enrolment stimulation activities in community settings and at events in accordance with the joint CRU program.
- Develop an enrolment stimulation and roll review plan that conforms to the new fixed term four year election cycle.
- Support a review of objection processing to ensure the timely removal from the roll of electors who are no longer resident at their enrolled address.
- Develop and implement enrolment programs to be undertaken from the Alice Springs office.
- Commence investigation into acquiring or leasing IT tools including specialised mapping systems and statistical packages to assist the work of the redistribution committees.
- Initiate community consultation and undertake research into new division names that may be adopted at future redistributions.

### 3. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

#### Objective - Outcome

A community that is well informed about its voting rights, obligations, electoral processes and services available to electors.

In accordance with s309 of the Act, the Commission promotes public awareness of matters relating to enrolment, voting and governance structures by conducting customised education and information programs.

During the period July to November 2008, the NTEC's education and information activities were focussed on raising awareness about enrolment and voting for the LA and rural council elections. Targeted awareness programs also continued in 2009 in support of council by-elections. In the period February to June 2009 an additional emphasis was placed on education and enrolment drives directed at school students, community groups and new residents to the Territory.

#### 3.1 School Visits and Education Programs

The NTEC electoral education program is undertaken in collaboration with the AEC to ensure a consistent approach and to make best use of combined resources. Presentations are tailored to meet the target group and specific requests of schools and organisers, but generally the topics discussed include the three levels of government, enrolment and the electoral roll, voting systems, voting obligations, marking a ballot paper correctly and the electoral services provided by the NTEC and the AEC. Sessions can include the management of school representative council (SRC) elections with students undertaking the various polling official duties.

During the reporting period, the joint NTEC and AEC electoral education program reached approximately 4000 students from all parts of the Territory, a 60% increase on the previous year. The NTEC contributed approximately one third of the joint program with the balance undertaken by the AEC, particularly in regional centres and remote communities.

The NTEC activities reached 1331 participants from primary, middle and high schools at 29 separate presentations, mostly to school groups who chose to have an electoral education session as part of an activity managed by the Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Relations and Education Unit.

NTEC staff also undertook electoral education sessions in Katherine and Jabiru, assisted with four SRC elections and developed and presented an electoral awareness program for East Timor electoral officials who visited the NT in October 2008. This latter program was focussed on comparative electoral systems and operational aspects of managing the inaugural rural council elections.

**Table 3:** Election awareness sessions undertaken by NTEC staff during 2008-09

Schools Location	Number of Sessions	Number of Participants
Darwin	13	803
Alice Springs	2	100
Katherine	3	124
Jabiru (with AEC)	6	150
Charles Darwin University	2	49
Other	3	105
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1331</b>

In February 2009 the NTEC commenced a review of materials for use in its education and awareness programs in response to the significant increase in the number of sessions undertaken and the range of groups being serviced. The review was based partly on resources used in other jurisdictions and particularly materials developed by the Victorian and New Zealand electoral authorities. The review took into account the Civics and Citizenship curriculum modules developed by the NT Department of Education and Training. A Commission officer participated in the national Electoral Educators Network workshop in May 2009 and presented a paper on indigenous communication strategies. A key focus of the Network is the linking of education and awareness activities undertaken by the various electoral authorities with the federal government's and State and Territory Civics and Citizenship school curriculum programs.

### **3.2 General Public Awareness Activities**

The NTEC provides the community with general electoral awareness information on an on-going basis. Whilst the website is increasingly the prime means of providing information, public awareness and media campaigns are undertaken at election time and targeted enrolment and information programs take place at appropriate community venues outside of elections. In early 2009, the NTEC and AEC jointly managed an awareness campaign to provide new residents to the Territory with information about elections and to prompt them, if required, to update their enrolment. Stalls were also run at shopping centres and at the annual show circuit to promote enrolment throughout the Territory.

As part of a review of the Commission's branding, a new logo and matching slogan **EVERY vote counts!** was applied to stationery, the website, advertising and polling equipment. A change was later made to the free call enquiry line to incorporate the smart word number 1800 MYVOTE. This number is now used on all electoral material and forms where appropriate and will be widely advertised through all media at future elections. Commencing with the LA election, the changes were progressively brought into production during the reporting period.

The NTEC also continued its revision of all publicly available printed materials using plain English. The review was undertaken to raise awareness of election processes, provide clearer guidelines for candidates and campaign managers and publicise the legal requirement for all eligible persons to enrol and vote. The review included the nomination form and handbook to provide candidates, parties and public officers with an accurate description of nomination requirements, election processes and deadlines.

### **3.3 Public Awareness for the LA and Rural Council Elections**

Legislation prescribes the timing and content of formal notices to be published for elections. At LA elections, the notices set out the date of an election and arrangements for the close of rolls, nominations, voting services and the declaration of results. At local government elections, the election period commences with the publication of the notice inviting nominations. Further advertising regarding enrolment and voting, including the location of polling places and arrangements for mobile polling, is undertaken in accordance with electoral best practice and key objectives set out in the Commission's public awareness strategy.

The 2008 LA and rural council election advertising campaigns were developed in tandem to maintain a consistent NTEC image, make best use of resources and to deliver a clear message specific to each election, despite the campaigns almost overlapping and having slightly different legislative requirements. As at previous elections and as a service to candidates, and campaign organisers, fourteen Election Bulletins were issued at the LA election and nine at the rural council elections. The bulletins were used to clarify the NTEC's position on issues as they arose and to provide guidelines to election participants and other stakeholders regarding campaigning, voting and the scrutiny at appropriate times during the election period.

The statutory notices for both elections were published in the NT News and 12 regional newspapers. The general advertising of enrolment and voting arrangements was broadcast over commercial TV and radio stations and community radio networks. Customised election posters setting out the key enrolment and voting message plus the arrangements for mobile polling were distributed widely to remote communities, service centres and roadhouses. All notices and advertisements published or broadcast were also available

on the NTEC's website. The advertising content and artwork for these publications was developed in-house by NTEC staff and placed directly with publishers and broadcasters.

### **3.4 NTEC Website**

A major review of the website was commenced by the NTEC in July 2008 to make it a more accessible and comprehensive resource on NT elections, enrolment and other electoral information. By June 2009, the functional specifications for the project had been finalised and a complete rewrite of the existing web content employing 'plain English' was underway.

A key feature of the web update has been the creation of election specific homepages to allow ready access to information such as maps of LA divisions and council wards, public notices, election timetables, mobile polling schedules, candidate specific material, forms and results. These changes were piloted in July 2008 for the LA general election and put into operation for the inaugural rural council elections and subsequent by-elections.

### **3.5 Research and Reports**

In accordance with s309 of the Act, the NTEC conducts and promotes research into matters relating to elections or other matters relating to its functions, subject to the availability of resources. Reports into the 2008 LA and rural council elections are being prepared for release in the 2009-10 reporting year.

With the support of the NTEC, a compendium of election results and short history of electoral administration since the Territory obtained its own elected legislature in 1974 was compiled by Professor Dean Jaensch of Flinders University with external funding. All data for the work was received by the end of May 2009.

### **3.6 Northern Territory Statehood**

The Statehood Steering Committee continues to undertake public awareness activities about statehood issues. The NTEC has liaised with the Statehood Executive Officer occasionally on matters of common interest; however the NTEC, as the likely administrator of any future plebiscite, has continued to generally distance itself from the Committee's operations as much as possible so as to preserve a non-partisan position.

### **3.7 Targets 2009-10**

- Complete the redevelopment of the NTEC's website.
- Undertake tailored public awareness activities in support of by-elections.
- Develop and implement a public awareness program from the Alice Springs office which includes a modest education facility.
- Review concepts for use in enrolment and education advertising packages.
- Explore emerging strategies in electoral education in other State/Territory jurisdictions.
- Work in conjunction with the Electoral Educators Network to develop cross-curricular links to assist with the take up of Civics and Citizenship programs by NT schools.
- Further develop school and community electoral education programs in co-operation with the AEC and the Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Relations and Education Unit.
- Devise and program education and awareness activities for inclusion in the NTEC's 5 year operational plan.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### Objective - Outcome

Efficient and effective conduct of elections.

During 2008-09 the NTEC conducted the Legislative Assembly (LA) election (August 2008), the rural council elections (October 2008), five rural council by-elections and five fee-for-service elections. Voting facilities were provided for 13 inter-jurisdiction elections and by-elections, the WA state referendum and the New Zealand general election. The NT LA and council elections were managed from the Commission's offices in Darwin and Alice Springs and temporary offices in regional centres.

#### 4.1 Legislative Assembly General Election

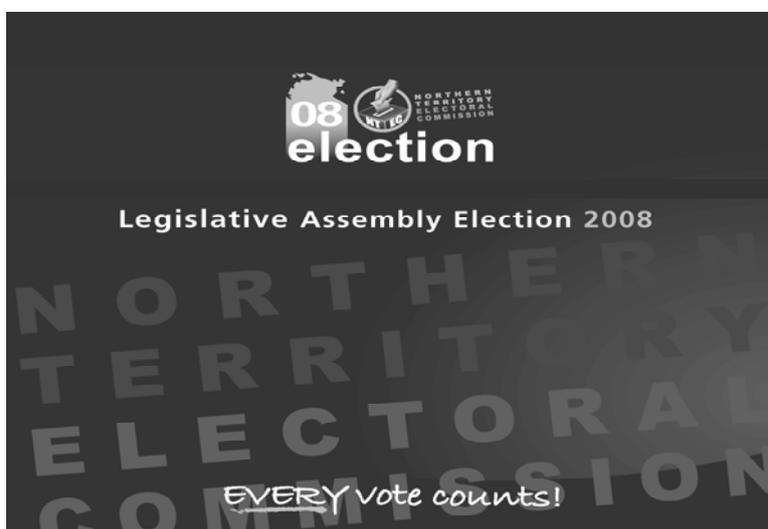
The LA election was held early in the fourth year of the NT Parliamentary term. A summary of the NTEC's management of the election, including the provision of voting services, is provided below. A full report on the LA election is expected to be released late in 2009.

A Writ for the LA election was issued on 22 July 2008 and provided for the following:

Close of rolls	8pm 24 July 2008
Close of nominations	12 noon 28 July 2008
Polling day	9 August 2008
Return of the writ	by 15 September 2008

#### Public Awareness

The public awareness campaign for the 2008 LA election commenced immediately on the announcement. In addition to the statutory notices placed in the press, advertising was focussed on providing electors with information on the close of rolls deadline and changes to divisional boundaries arising from the 2008 Redistribution. Closer to polling day, advertising concentrated on the provision of voting services including the availability of early and postal voting, details of mobile and static polling place opening times and access for those with a disability.



Picture: Legislative Assembly election graphic

The advertising directed electors to the NTEC's Call Centre (CC) and website for further information. The CC received 3500 calls during the election of which 50% were enquiries about enrolment and voting. The NTEC upgraded its website prior to the election, a major source of information for the public. A total of 57 000 page views were recorded, of which an estimated 17 000 were made before polling day and related to the close of rolls and voting arrangements. The website was also used to provide general information to candidates and political parties and, after the close of polls, details of the count and results.

## **Enrolment**

Over the three day close of rolls period to 24 July 2008, a total of 2015 enrolments were processed, including 1002 additions to the NT roll, the balance being for change of address within the Territory or amendment to enrolment details. At the close of rolls there were 119 814 electors enrolled to vote, an increase of 7.2% over the previous 12 months.

## **Nominations**

At the close of nominations a total of 66 candidates had nominated. There were 13 divisions with three or more nominations. One nomination was received in each of the divisions of Arnhem and Macdonnell and, consequently, no elections were required and the respective candidates were declared elected at the declaration of nominations on 28 July 2008.

## **Postal Voting**

The NTEC issued 4072 postal vote packs during the election, of which 2403 were lodged with Australia Post on 31 July 2008, the first day allowed for in the Act. The first posting was made up of mail to registered postal voters and other applicants for postal votes and was lodged, where necessary, at post offices in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs to ensure local electors and the 266 postal voters in remote areas received their votes via the first possible mail delivery. All international mail was despatched by express post. By the last date for receipt on 15 August 2008, a total of 2916 postal vote envelopes had been mailed back by electors, this being 71.6% of the initial mailing.

An examination of voting records indicated that almost 50% of electors who failed to return a postal vote in fact voted at a pre-poll, mobile or static polling place and a further 10% of mail was returned unclaimed as the addressee had left their address. The balance of approximately 400 unaccounted for postal voters was made up mainly of electors who were less likely to be able to meet the short mailing deadlines as their applications were made in the last few days before polling day, or received from interstate or overseas after the commencement of the election.

However, the NTEC was aware that registered postal voters serviced by a small number of mail contractors operating out of Katherine and Mt Isa received their postal votes too late for return despite lodgement on 31 July. In response, arrangements were made for Australia Post to expedite the return of mail to Darwin and where practical, the NTEC collected postal vote mail directly from remote properties to the south of Katherine.

## **Pre-poll Voting**

Pre-poll voting centres operated in the week before polling day at the NTEC offices, at five other locations in Darwin and regional centres and at all capital cities. Pre-polling was also provided at Jabiru on the day before polling. There was a significant increase in pre-polling with a total of 9217 ballot papers counted, representing 11% of all ballot papers counted at the election. The increase is consistent with experience in other jurisdictions when many electors are on holidays or otherwise away from their enrolled address at the time of the election.

## Mobile Polling

Mobile teams provided attendance voting facilities to electors at 196 communities in remote areas and 21 institutions including hospitals, prisons and aged care facilities. A total of 23 mobile teams were employed, travelling by vehicle where possible, or by plane to the most remote sites and island communities. The teams issued 8408 ordinary ballot papers, 10.1% of all ballot papers counted. Despite there being no polling for Arnhem and Macdonnell, an abbreviated mobile schedule operated in these divisions to pick up absent votes for electors present but enrolled in other divisions.



Photo: Mobile polling station

Mobile polling remained the most resource intensive component of the election, requiring long term planning, focussed election awareness activities and direct liaison with individual communities.

## Static Polling

A total of 52 349 electors (62.7% of the total) voted on polling day at one of 47 static polling places, including three joint polling places appointed for adjoining divisions.

## Absent and Declaration Voting

Electors unable to get to a polling place within their division are able to claim an absent vote and have their name marked off a Territory wide list of electors. At the 2008 election, 10 709 absent ballot papers were counted (12.8% of the total), due in part to changes to electoral boundaries that preceded the election.

A total of 981 declaration ballot papers were issued to persons who claimed an entitlement but whose name could not be found on the roll; 105 were subsequently admitted to the scrutiny after checks against the roll.

## The Scrutiny of Votes and Declaration of Results

A preliminary count of votes received at static polling places and votes to hand from mobile, pre-poll, absent and postal voting was undertaken at the conclusion of polling on 9 August 2008. The preliminary results, including a two candidate preferred count, were immediately phoned to the tally room at the Chan Building in Darwin and posted on the NTEC's website. Over the following week, all ballot papers were subject to further checking and declaration vote envelopes, including postal vote envelopes, were scrutinised to determine if the ballot papers contained were eligible to be admitted to further scrutiny. Immediately after the final admittance of postal votes on 15 August, a full distribution of preferences for each division was undertaken and the results posted to the NTEC website. The declaration of the polls took place on Monday 18 August 2008 and the writ was then returned to the Administrator.

## Participation

The raw participation rate was 75.7% of enrolled electors. Compared to previous general elections, there was a decline in the raw participation in all divisions with the biggest drop being in the Alice Springs divisions and the three divisions covering the Darwin inner suburbs.

The NTEC believes the decline was the result of a complex mix of factors with the most important influences being the quality of the roll, the timing of the election, reduced political activities and localised factors in some communities. Of the 26 853 apparent non-voters, 33% provided the NTEC with a valid and sufficient reason for not voting due mainly to their being away from their address during the election; for a further 25% of non-voters, mail was returned endorsed 'left address'. The volume of returned non-voter mail confirmed separate evidence that many electors had permanently left their enrolled address, including a proportion who had moved interstate. These electors remained on the roll as they had either not transferred their enrolment or had not been removed from the roll by the formal objection process.

At 30 June 2009, 63% of apparent non-voters at the 2008 election had either been excused for not voting, or had paid the \$25 fine. Non response, especially from remote areas, continues to be significant and difficult to manage. Court action was proceeding against a small number of non-voters and it is expected that all follow up will be completed early in the next reporting period.

Table 4: 2008 Election comparisons

Issue	LA Elections		Local Government Elections 2008			
	August 2008		October Rural		March Municipal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>No. on roll</b>	119 814 (contested divisions 110 289)		39003 (contested elections 34125)		76604	
<b>No. vacancies</b>	25		117		36	
<b>No. candidates</b> Ratio candidates: vacancies	66 2.6:1		211 2.8:1		90 2.5:1	
<b>Elections</b>						
Uncontested	2		18		-	
Contested	23		31		11	
<b>Polling</b>						
Postal	2648	3.2	430	2.5	816	1.5
Pre-poll (Early)	9217	11.0	1360	8.0	5519	10.2
Mobile	8408	10.1	8225	48.5	201	0.4
Static	52349	62.7	6508	38.4	44592	82.4
Absent	10709	12.8	395	2.3	2890	5.3
Declaration	105	0.1	38	0.2	78	0.1
<b>Turnout</b>						
No. & % voting	83436	75.7	16956	49.7	54096	70.6
<b>Informality</b>						
% voting informally		4.1		9.6		6.5 mayor 9.2 alderman
<b>Staffing</b>						
No. mobile teams	23		15		7	
Polling/casual admin positions	413		93		139	
Seconded staff	17		8		2	
<b>Polling locations</b>						
Pre-poll (Early) Intra-state	8		7		5	
Pre-poll Interstate	7		-		-	
Mobile	217		208		23	
Static	47		15		27	
<b>2 party preferred</b>						
Labor	39415	49.3	Non party political		Non party political	
Non-labor	40614	50.7				

## 4.2 Rural Council General Elections

During 2007, the government announced plans to replace the existing community government councils and schemes in remote areas of the Territory with regionally based 'super shire' councils. In October 2007 re-structuring orders were gazetted that established the prospective shire councils and deferred elections scheduled for March 2008, except for the municipalities of Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs.

The *Local Government Act 2008* was passed by the Legislative Assembly in the April – May sittings and came into effect on 1 July 2008. Details of the new shire councils were gazetted on 30 June 2008. The Electoral Commissioner was appointed as Returning Officer (RO) for the October inaugural elections by the ten shire councils going to election and the municipality of Litchfield.

The Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2008, providing the new legislative framework for all council elections, were gazetted 29 August 2008.

The elections commenced on 12 September by Notice inviting nominations and in accordance with the Regulations provided for the following:

Close of rolls	5pm 23 September 2008
Close of nominations	12 noon 2 October 2008
Polling day	25 October 2008

As the rural council elections followed immediately after the LA election, use was made of existing operational arrangements, particularly for mobile polling and public awareness activities. However, amended procedures were used for the receipt of nominations, the advertising of voting services to meet local government legislative requirements and the logistical challenges posed by the election.

### Public Awareness

The council election public awareness campaign was delivered mainly through the electronic media, the NTEC website and as posters to shires and service centres for community display. To reach electors in the three rural councils in the outer Darwin area, advertising was placed in the regional newspapers whilst Litchfield Shire had a letterbox drop arranged. The NTEC considered that this mix provided reasonable access for the largest number of electors, irrespective of location and literacy levels.



Picture: Shire and Rural Council election graphic

The TV campaign consisted of four TV advertisements with a total of 2500 program placements over the course of the election, broadcast where possible to regional areas. The four advertising themes used related to the roll close, the provision of voting services, mobile polling awareness and 'who does and who doesn't vote', the latter message required as not all wards were contested.

Radio was used more extensively as the content could be more readily adapted for broadcasting indigenous languages and as radio can provide a better coverage to the more remote communities. The four election advertising themes were presented by local radio staff and were broadcast over commercial stations and five community networks, the latter including broadcasts in nine indigenous languages, depending on geographic coverage.

## **Enrolment**

Over the 12 day close of rolls period to 23 September 2008, a total of 249 enrolment forms were received for the 11 rural councils, mostly for a change of address within the same council area. Over the same period there were 146 deletions to the roll for deceased electors and those transferring to addresses elsewhere. The relatively low level of activity was a consequence of enrolment stimulation at the LA election two months before and the federal election in 2007. At the close of rolls, 39 003 electors were enrolled to vote for the 11 rural councils.

## **Nominations**

The full three week period was required to distribute nomination materials to remote locations and for the return of completed forms and deposits. A total of 211 nominations from 206 persons were received for the 115 councillor and two president positions, with elections for 17 wards not being required as the number of nominations equalled the member positions. The election for Iyarrka Ward (MacDonnell Shire) partially failed due to insufficient nominations, thus generating a by-election at a later date.

## **Postal and Other Voting Services**

There were 542 registered postal voters enrolled for the rural councils and a further 127 electors applied for a postal vote. The first mailing took place on 6 October, almost three weeks before polling day and comprised 560 postal vote packs, with subsequent mailing taking place on receipt of applications. By the deadline for return on 31 October, 70% of postal votes issued had been returned. Very few postal votes were received after the deadline indicating that the time provided for voting and the mailing arrangements were appropriate.

Only a small number of declaration votes were claimed by electors compared to the number at the LA election. A total of 1360 ballot papers (8.1% of those counted) were issued at the seven voting centres that operated at council offices at Bees Creek, Jabiru, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek, at government offices at Katherine and at NTEC offices. In addition, there were 395 absent votes (2.3% of voters) cast by persons outside of their enrolled council area and 104 other declaration votes (0.6%) claimed by persons whose name could not be found on the roll, of which 38 were admitted to the count.

## **Mobile Polling**

The mobile polling procedures and schedules employed at the LA election were used as a base for the rural council elections. Adjustments were required to take into account the operational experience at the LA poll and those wards where polling was not required. Extensive consultation took place with council staff in developing and publicising the final schedules. Polling commenced on 13 October and over the following two weeks, 15 teams visited 208 communities in remote areas, aged care and health facilities in Katherine and Tennant Creek and hospitals and the gaols in Darwin and Alice Springs. Mobile polling accounted for 80% of votes cast in the eight new rural councils. There was an overall 10% drop in the number voting at communities and institutions compared to polling at the LA election.

## **Static Polling**

Static polling was available on 25 October at the 15 polling places appointed for Litchfield, Wagait and Barkly councils and in Darwin and regional centres. A total of 6508 electors voted at static booths, 38.4% of the overall turnout but with the majority of these ballot papers (5013) cast at the five polling places for Litchfield council, with much of the remainder at Tennant Creek, Jabiru and Wagait.

## **The Scrutiny of Votes and Declaration of Results**

The exhaustive preferential voting system legislated for NT council elections generally requires a computer system to count and allocate preferences for multi-member constituencies to ensure timely and economical determination of the count.

For the rural council elections, the NTEC negotiated a business arrangement with the AEC to use the EasyCount vote counting system. Prior to the election, the necessary software was installed and tested on PCs and laptops for use in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. After the conclusion of polling on 25 October, the scrutiny was undertaken at these centres and details shown on the ballot papers in 24 complex counts were entered into EasyCount. Seven counts were concluded by manual scrutiny. The preliminary results of all elections were posted to the NTEC website as soon as they were available and were subsequently confirmed by the RO and Deputy ROs at the declaration of results held at the NTEC's office and regional centres on 3 November 2008.

## **Participation**

There were 34 125 electors enrolled in the council wards where polling was required. A total of 16 956 electors voted, giving an overall participation rate of 49.7% for the election. The average does mask significant differences in turnout between councils and wards and, in remote areas, between communities. The participation rate for the eight new councils in the remote areas was 46.7% compared to 57.6% for the three rural councils in the Darwin region. Details of participation by ward and council are provided at Table 6.

Table 5: Council Shire elections October 2008 – enrolment, turnout and informality

Region	Council - Ward Name	Enrolment	No. Nominations	No. Vacancies	Average Candidates per Contested Election	Election Turnout Contested Elections %	Turnout by Council - CONTESTED Elections %	Informality Contested Elections %	Informality by Council - CONTESTED Elections %
1	Coomalie CG Council - Adelaide River Rural	94	2	1		46.8	46.8	11.4	11.4
1	Coomalie CG Council - Adelaide River Town	86	2	2	2				
1	Coomalie CG Council - Batchelor Rural	118	1	1					
1	Coomalie CG Council - Batchelor Town	192	3	3					
1	Coomalie CG Council - Coomalie/Tortilla	33	1	1					
1	Coomalie CG Council - Lake Bennett	45	1	1					
1	East Arnhem Shire - Anindilyakwa	908	6	3			46.1	41.7	14.6
1	East Arnhem Shire - Gumurr Gatjirrk	1295	4	3	6	33.1	10.3		
1	East Arnhem Shire - Gumurr Marthakal	1196	3	3					
1	East Arnhem Shire - Gumurr Miwatj	1867	9	3		45.5	30.0		
1	Litchfield President		3	1	2	55.4	55.4 President - not all wards contested	7.1	7.5
1	Litchfield Council - East Ward	2535	3	1		64.1		7.1	
1	Litchfield Council - Central Ward	2263	2	1		60.1		9.7	
1	Litchfield Council - North Ward	3159	1	1					
1	Litchfield Council - South Ward	2821	1	1					
1	Tiwi Islands Shire - Milikapiti	284	3	3	7		59.8		4.8
1	Tiwi Islands Shire - Nguiu	960	10	5		58.5		6.2	
1	Tiwi Islands Shire - Pirlangimpi	251	4	3		64.5		0.0	
1	Tiwi Islands Shire - Wurankuwu	38	1	1					
1	Wagait Shire Council	219	10	7	10	84.9	84.9	3.2	3.2
1	West Arnhem Shire - Barrah	476	8	3	7	49.6	42.9	11.4	10.2
1	West Arnhem Shire - Gunbalanya	732	9	3		63.4		17.0	
1	West Arnhem Shire - Kakadu	759	8	3		54.4		3.6	
1	West Arnhem Shire - Maningrida	1460	5	3		24.4		8.1	

Table 5: Council Shire elections October 2008 – enrolment, turnout and informality (Continued)

Region	Council - Ward Name	Enrolment	No. Nominations	No. Vacancies	Avg. Candidates per Contested Election	Election Turnout Contested Elections %	Turnout by Council - CONTESTED Elections %	Informality Contested Elections %	Informality by Council - CONTESTED Elections %
2	Roper Gulf Shire - Never Never	690	7	3	5	54.3	44.0	8.3	8.4
2	Roper Gulf Shire - Numbulwar Numburindi	493	2	1		39.1		11.4	
2	Roper Gulf Shire - Nyirranggulung	893	5	3		40.3		7.8	
2	Roper Gulf Shire - South West Gulf	908	6	3		50.9		7.4	
2	Roper Gulf Shire - Yugul Mangi	683	4	2		32.5		9.0	
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Daguragu	434	1	1	3		46.1		7.4
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Milngin	383	2	1		59.3		8.8	
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Nganmariyanga	206	1	1					
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Pine Creek	251	1	1					
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi	1265	5	4		42.1		6.8	
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Timber Creek	437	2	2					
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Tyemirri	103	1	1					
2	Victoria Daly Shire - Walangeri	294	1	1					
3	Barkly President		4	1	6	57.3	57.3 President + all wards contested	7.5	8.5
3	Barkly Shire - Alyawarr	1696	7	4		50.8		13.2	
3	Barkly Shire - Patta	1930	9	5		66.4		8.0	
3	Barkly Shire - Yapakurlangu	550	3	2		50.4		5.4	
3	Central Desert Shire - Akityarre	261	4	2	8	45.6	47.1	5.9	20.0
3	Central Desert Shire - Anmatjere	998	9	4		55.8		25.5	
3	Central Desert Shire - Northern Tanami	474	2	2					
3	Central Desert Shire - Southern Tanami	946	11	4		38.3		16.3	
3	MacDonnell Shire - Iyarrka	687	1	2	8		40.3		10.3
3	MacDonnell Shire - Ljirapinta	677	8	3		46.7		7.3	
3	MacDonnell Shire - Luritja Pintubi	840	5	3		42.1		8.5	
3	MacDonnell Shire - Rodinga	1113	10	4		35.0		14.4	
		39003	211	117					
Turnout % (inc President not ward turnout Barkly & Litchfield)							49.7		
Informality % (all informals/all BPs counted - presidential + wards)							9.6		

### 4.3 Council By-Elections

The Electoral Commissioner was appointed as RO to conduct five by-elections to fill single vacant positions on rural councils during 2008-09, including a by-election for Iyarka Ward in MacDonnell Shire arising from the failure to obtain sufficient nominations to fill all positions at the inaugural election in October 2008. The NTEC also provided rolls and advice for the Yapakurlangu Ward by-election run by the Chief Executive Officer of Barkly Shire Council in February 2009.

**Table 6:** Council by-elections undertaken by NTEC 2008-09

Council and Ward	Election Date	Electors on Roll	Noms Rec'd	C/U	Ballot Papers			Turnout %
					Formal	Informal	Total	
MacDonnell (Iyarka Ward)	13.12.2008	687	2	C	285	22	307	44.7
Wagait	9. 5.2009	224	1	U	0	0	0	0
West Arnhem (Barrah)	13.6.2009	481	1	U	0	0	0	0
Victoria Daly (Daguragu)	13.6.2009	426	4	C	138	9	147	34.5
" (Thamarrurr/Pindi Pindi)	13.6.2009	1288	2	C	598	35	633	49.1

**Note:** C = Contested election

U = Uncontested

### 4.4 Fee-for-Service Elections

Section 309(h) & (i) of the Act allows the Commission to conduct ballots for persons and organisations and to provide, on payment of a fee, electoral goods and services using information or material in its possession or expertise acquired in the exercise of its functions. Fee-for-service ballots are conducted for government and non-government organisations for purposes set out in their rules, including the endorsement of enterprise agreements, the election of office holders and the holding of plebiscites.

During the first half of the reporting period, the NTEC was fully committed to the management of the 2008 Legislative Assembly General Election and 2008 shire and rural council elections leaving only limited resources available to undertake elections for other commercial clients. Following the conclusion of the 2008 shire elections, the Commission conducted four fee-for-service elections and one EBA ballot for the organisations set out at Table 7 below. An election for the Bagot Community Inc did not proceed on membership grounds.

**Table 7:** Fee-for-service elections conducted 2008-09

Organisation	Poll Date	Ballot		Voting Method		No. Electors
		Type	No. Positions			
Nguiu Ullintjinni Association Inc	25.11.2008	Election	8	FPP	A	117
NT Water Ski Association	30.11.2008	Election <sup>(1)</sup>	6	FPP	A	1758
NTPS Nurses EBA Ballot	1.12.2008	Ballot	-	Y/N	P	2092
NT Prison Officers Association	23.1.2009	Election	8	FPP	P	265
General Practice Network NT	3.5.2009	Election <sup>(1)</sup>	4	Pref	A/P	477

**Notes:**

(1) Uncontested election

Y/N Yes/No                      Pref Preferential                      A Attendance ballot  
 FPP First Past the Post                      P Postal ballot

During the first half of 2009, the NTEC undertook a review of its management processes and procedures for conducting external elections. Notwithstanding the review, concerns remain about undertaking elections for

organisations where the procedures for maintaining and providing an accurate election roll are not strictly in accordance with best practice and in a number of instances, organisations were advised that amendments were required to their election rules.

#### 4.5 Assistance for Inter-Jurisdictional Elections

The NTEC supports other State/Territory electoral authorities by providing access to polling facilities for electors from their jurisdictions who are in the Territory when an election or referendum is called in their home state. During the reporting period, staff provided voting services for the elections and referendums set out below.

**Table 8:** Provision of voting services for inter-jurisdictional elections

Jurisdiction	Poll Date	Election Type	Chamber	District/Division	Votes Issued		
					Darwin	Alice Springs	Total
WA	6.9.2008	GE	LA/LC	All	450	-	450
ACT	18.10.2008	GE	LA	All	17	-	17
NSW	18.10.2008	By	LA	Cabramatta	0	-	0
"	18.10.08	By	LA	Lakemba	1	-	1
"	18.10.08	By	LA	Port Macquarie	12	-	12
"	18.10.2008	By	LA	Ryde	2	-	2
New Zealand	18.11.2008	GE	HofR	All	27	-	27
SA	17.1.2009	By	HA	Frome	0	-	0
Qld	21.3.2009	GE	LA	All	299	80	379
Tas	2.5.2009	GE	LC	Derwent	0	-	0
"	2.5.2009	GE	LC	Mersey	1	-	1
"	2.5.2009	GE	LC	Windermere	0	-	0
WA	16.5.2009	REF	-	All	145	-	145
"	16.5.2009	By	LA	Fremantle	2	-	2
New Zealand	13.6.2009	By	HofR	Mt Albert	0	-	0

**Notes:**

By	By-election	HofR	House of Representatives	REF	Referendum
GE	General Election	LA	Legislative Assembly	LC	Legislative Council
HA	House of Assembly				

#### 4.6 Disclosure

The Act requires annual disclosure returns by registered parties, associated entities and donors and election specific disclosure by candidates, donors, publishers and broadcasters. The return requires parties to disclose their donations above \$1500 and expenditure during the year. Donors to parties are also required to furnish a return to the Commission within 20 weeks of the end of the financial year. Further requirements to lodge returns occur whenever an LA election or by-election is held.

All registered parties lodged their annual returns for 2007-08 within the prescribed timeframes and the returns were displayed on the NTEC website. Following the 2008 LA election, election returns were received from candidates not separately reported in a registered party annual return.

The NT disclosure requirements were aligned with the Commonwealth until 2006 when the federal government significantly increased the threshold limits for Commonwealth purposes. Whilst the current federal government has indicated they intend to lower the threshold limits to below that of the Territory, this

has not taken place to date resulting in the continuation of different reporting provisions at Territory and federal levels. The Electoral Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner attended an inter-jurisdictional conference between Commissioners regarding the policy and operational implications of having different disclosure provisions. Following the conference, the disclosure handbooks for candidates, registered political parties, donors, associated entities, broadcasters and publishers were updated with a summary of the disclosure requirements. The updated handbooks were placed on the NTEC website for public access.

#### **4.7 Targets 2009-10**

- Maintain the NTEC's responsiveness to requests for the Electoral Commissioner to act as returning officer for council elections.
- Customisation of operational and public awareness programs for the conduct of by-elections as they occur.
- Contribute to discussions on the legislative framework for both parliamentary and local government elections.

## **5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

### **Objective - Outcome**

An agency that provides the necessary staff and infrastructure to meet corporate and operational obligations.

### **5.1 Human Resource Management**

Report under section 18 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*.

In accordance with section 18(2) of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*, the NTEC responded by survey to the Commissioner for Public Employment concerning the Commission's compliance with the prescribed principles of human resource (HR) management during the reporting year.

The NTEC seeks advice when necessary from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) and DBE regarding NT public sector wide HR legislation, instructions and guidelines and the implementation of the relevant HR policies and practices. No grievance disputes arose during the year.

### **Equal Opportunity**

The NTEC employs merit based employment criteria for the selection of all staff, including temporary and casual office staff. The selection of staff for static polling places and mobile polling is undertaken using merit based criteria, subject to the exigencies of the election timetable. All employees, including casual staff, must sign an acceptance and undertaking that they are not a member of a political party or active in political affairs and that they will retain this status during the period of their employment.

The Commission promotes a staffing gender balance to facilitate appropriate dialogue with electors, particularly for enrolment, electoral awareness and election activities in communities. This policy was rigorously applied in selecting staff for the 2008 elections.

A trainee has continuing employment in the NTEC's Darwin office for an equivalent of a single full day per week under a disability work program.

### **Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)**

Election and training manuals for managers of polling places and remote mobile polling teams were updated during the reporting period with particular emphasis on recognition of the particular risks that could be encountered in the field. The agency reviewed schedules for mobile polling to ensure sufficient time was available for travel between centres and minimum staffing levels were set for enrolment and public awareness activities in remote areas.

The Commission provided information regarding OH&S issues at briefings for local election staff and officers seconded from other electoral authorities who were taking up duties at regional centres. The briefings were held prior to the 2008 Legislative Assembly and rural council general elections and feedback was actively sought at post election de-briefings. Staff undertaking election duties, particularly in the field, were advised of amendments to OH&S procedures as set out in the revised election manuals.

At training sessions for polling staff, OICs were given instruction on the necessity of ensuring the safety and welfare of staff and electors in their polling places and the need to respond promptly to any issues. Polling official manuals were updated to this effect and staff were made aware of the requirements at training.

### **Flexible Work Practices**

The flex-time policy was suspended during the LA and rural council election periods as all staff were required to commit to demanding and time critical operational workloads.

## **Equity and Diversity**

The NTEC services a diverse community located over a geographically wide area. It aims to recruit personnel able to communicate and interact with that community, regardless of gender, language, ethnicity, disadvantage or any physical or other impairment. It gave emphasis to diversity in employment during the two election periods.

The demographic profile of staff at 30 June 2009, excluding casual staff, was:

- Three staff were in the 25-40 age range (including the two supernumerary officers);
- One staff member was aged between 41 and 50;
- Seven staff (including four permanent officers) were aged over 50; and
- Five out of eleven staff were female (45%).

## **Recruitment and Retention**

Retention rates amongst permanent staff remained high during the reporting period. Three short-term positions were maintained for enrolment and public awareness activities, financial support and, on occasion, to provide support in the Alice Springs office.

Following discussions with Treasury and the Department of Business and Employment (DBE), arrangements were put in place to assess the corporate support needs of the NTEC. An officer was seconded for nine months commencing in July 2008 to give effect to this decision. The tasks undertaken by the officer included:

- A review of the NTEC's financial and HR policies, delegations and procurement procedures; and
- The implementation of internal procedures to extend NTEC access to on-line corporate management applications.

## **Employee Expenses**

In 2007-08 employee expenses were approximately \$1.297 million or 55% of total expenses; in 2008-09 employee expenses were \$1.992 or 45% of the total.

Annual expenditure on staff and other operational expenses fluctuates significantly from year to year as a result of the holding of electoral events. The employment of election casual staff at the LA and rural council elections added significantly to staff costs in 2008-09.

## **Election Staff**

DBE provided the NTEC with two staff for financial and logistical support during the 2008 election periods, with one officer retained by the Commission until March 2009 to complete a review of policy relating to audit and procurement.

The NTEC approached a number of interstate agencies in early July 2008 to provide staff to assist at the LA and rural council elections. The AEC released ten officers and the Tasmanian and Victorian electoral commissions released one and six officers respectively for work at the LA election. A further eight AEC staff were employed for the rural council elections, plus two experienced former AEC staff. The interstate staff provided expert support in project management positions in Darwin and for the mobile polling program. They also filled the regional coordinator positions in Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek.

As at all general elections, a large number of casual staff were recruited within the Territory for polling and office support positions. At the LA election, 413 casual staff were recruited for periods ranging from one day to a number of weeks to undertake static and mobile polling duties and to provide office support in Darwin and regional centres. At the rural council elections, 93 casual staff were employed.

Staff who had discharged their duties appropriately at the LA and rural council elections were recruited as needed for council by-election work, subject to their availability.

As has been noted by other electoral authorities, there is an ageing of polling staff and it is increasingly difficult to recruit new staff.

Prior to the LA election, the Electoral Commissioner reviewed polling official categories and negotiated with OCPE to simplify and set revised and more equitable award rates for all categories of polling officials.

## **Employee Development Activities**

As a small agency, the NTEC requires staff to be conversant with its core business and have the capacity to work across positions. The NTEC has commenced rotating staff across different election projects to explore multi-skilling and to expand the total staff knowledge base.

Due to election commitments, other general employee development activities were restricted to the second half of the reporting year. In late 2008 all staff received training in 'Outlook' as part of the whole of government move to that email application. Training was also provided in selected Microsoft Office and administrative related packages, as well as in finance and procurement.

In preparation for the 2008 LA and rural council elections, all manuals, training session content and PowerPoint presentations were reviewed and updated for the training of polling staff. To ensure the timely and accurate counting of ballot papers at the rural council elections, the NTEC undertook a rigorous training program in October 2008 for all staff using the EasyCount computerised vote counting system. The EasyCount system administrator developed training materials, trained staff and maintained quality control during production.

The NTEC has signalled the need to adopt improved training techniques and materials for permanent officers and casual staff undertaking parliamentary and local government elections. The Commission is contributing with other electoral jurisdictions to the development of on-line packages for the training of polling staff to better cope with the high turnover between elections and the difficulties of organising training at central venues for elections that take place across the Territory. The NTEC is also investigating the development of specialised modules for the training of mobile polling staff.

Set term elections will allow a re-appraisal of training and on-the-job support for seconded staff assigned to regional co-ordinator positions. The agency is seeking to reinforce the leadership capacities of certain positions in the Commission's emerging structure and to enhance the skill set of existing employees in the limited windows of opportunity available after meeting ad-hoc elections and inter-jurisdictional commitments.

## **Report Under Section 7 of the *Carers Recognition Act***

Since 1995, carers of people unable to attend a polling place on polling day are eligible to apply for a postal vote under provisions of the Act. A carer may apply for a single election or on an ongoing basis as a registered postal voter. At the time of the 2008 LA and rural council elections, 33 carers were registered as postal voters.

Separately, two Commission staff were granted carers' leave during the reporting year.

## 5.2 Corporate Management

A five year operational plan is to be developed for program and service delivery requirements for the newly introduced fixed date LA general elections, next scheduled for 2012. The operational plan will need to take into account the possibility that the NTEC may be required to play a significant role in the concurrent municipal and shire council elections in March 2012.

### IT Directions

DBE provides the NTEC with ITC support and payroll and recruitment services. Internally, responsibility for day to day ITC matters and specialised IT tools rests with the NTEC's Business Manager.

At the beginning of the 2008-09 reporting year, with the October 2008 council elections pending and the possibility of an early LA election, arrangements were made with DBE for the immediate installation of an additional ten PCs for the mobile polling program, project officer support and the election call centre. A further four PCs were acquired for corporate support positions and public awareness activities. These facilities were brought into operation immediately after the writ for the LA election was issued on 22 July 2008.

Regional offices established for the election periods were able to access NTEC systems and files which considerably enhanced responsiveness to election demands.

The NTEC's existing *Election Management System* (EMS) was used for both LA and rural council elections. The EMS is a time expired computer application with no module to capture and store election results. It has deficiencies in reporting, is slow in operation and awkward for users to navigate. Also, it is not integrated with other office systems and the website. The NTEC has recommended replacement of the EMS, or its substantial overhaul, to bring it into line with standards in other jurisdictions.

Ideally, a new or revamped system should be implemented by 2011 so that detailed election planning can commence for the general elections in 2012. A year's lead time is considered essential for the commissioning, testing and modification of a new system.

The AEC loaded PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) with the full Territory roll for reference use by staff at pre-poll and static polling places for the LA election. These were first trialled in the Grotorex by-election in July 2007 and given more widespread use at the municipal elections in March 2008. The NTEC is monitoring the capacity for PDAs to be used with a mark-off facility to expedite the roll marking process.

In July 2008 the NTEC acquired EasyCount software from the AEC to replace the existing outmoded Compuvote system. EasyCount is a Windows based application that allows the automatic counting and allocation of preference votes for multi-member constituencies following the data entry of voters' preferences marked on ballot papers and is essential for complex counts at certain council elections. The application is stable, well documented and used by other electoral authorities. DBE handled the liaison over installation and the NTEC employed its own project officer to oversee testing, implementation, training and management of the software. It was used at the counts for 24 multi-member wards at the council elections in October 2008.

In July 2008, the NTEC acquired Creative Suite 3, a graphic software package. It allowed staff to produce public awareness materials in-house for the LA and rural council elections and is currently used to produce by-election and general electoral education materials.

An arrangement with the AEC will allow a number of NTEC officers to receive training early in the next reporting year to directly download formatted election rolls from RMANS. This will save the AEC staff time in responding to an increasing number of roll closures for NT local government by-elections and improve turnaround times. Staff will also receive training in phase one of GENESIS, the new roll management system currently being commissioned by the AEC.

During 2009-10 it is expected that work on the redevelopment of the NTEC's website will be completed. Also, it is planned that investigations into the feasibility and costs of acquiring a new EMS will be finalised,

training in computer packages used by the NTEC will be maintained, and further discussions held with the AEC regarding the redevelopment of EasyCount prior to the 2012 elections.

The NTEC is also supporting a cross jurisdictional project to develop a program and materials for distance training of polling officials over the internet. It has also noted the request of the Redistribution Committees that IT tools, including mapping and statistical software, be examined with a view to them being available for the next LA redistribution.

## Provision of Services by DBE and Fujitsu

Liaison officers from DBE and Fujitsu provided IT support during the 2008 municipal, LA and rural council elections. Monthly meetings were held in the lead up to the elections to monitor ITC needs, plan hardware installation and support and to notify key dates and times when emergency support was critical in the event of hardware /software failure. This regular dialogue was instrumental in optimising their support. An officer from DBE attended the WA elections in September 2008 to investigate the EMS used by the WA Electoral Commission and to gain a general appreciation of the operating environment of election IT systems.

## Insurance Reporting

During 2008-09, the NTEC made no self insurance or commercial insurance claim in any insurable risk category and paid no insurance premiums. In 2007-08 no insurance claims were made and a total of \$20 000 was expended on insurance premiums.

The NTEC implemented the following mitigation strategies during 2008-09 to reduce the insurable risk arising from its operations:

- Revised the NTEC's 'Accounting and Property Manual' to contain specific reference to insurance and litigation matters including instructions for drivers of Commission vehicles by reference to the NT Fleet handbook;
- Collated OH&S guides and checklists relevant to the NTEC's operation requirements;
- Provided mandated instructions and training on OH&S issues for mobile and senior polling officials; and
- Limited mobile polling schedules to eight hour shifts, where possible, and issued teams with appropriate safety equipment including EPIRBs and satellite phones.

## Records Management

In respect of the Commissioner's responsibilities pursuant to section 131 of the *Information Act*, the agency has implemented processes to achieve compliance with the archives and records management provisions as prescribed in Part 9 of the Information Act.

### 5.3 Alice Springs Office

The NTEC and the AEC have maintained a joint office in Alice Springs for the last 12 years. Previously staffed mainly at election times, since early 2005 the NTEC has sought to employ full time staff on site to better manage local government elections and provide an on-going shop front service to the public and other stakeholders.



Picture: MyVote Central logo

The office remained operational during major electoral events in the reporting period. During the first half of 2008-09, it was staffed by a regional coordinator sent from Darwin and by officers seconded from interstate jurisdictions. For the remainder of the reporting year, casual staff were employed on short term contracts to meet immediate operational needs. The office remained open for the Iyarrka by-election in December 2008, the January – February 2009 electoral roll Sample Audit Fieldwork (SAF) review and in March 2008 for the Queensland general election.

The NTEC, which now has prime responsibility for the management of the office and has received funding from the Government and a contribution from the AEC for its relocation and to upgrade the premises. The new office, MyVote Central, is located in Suite 3 Yeperenye Centre, with an entrance off Gregory Terrace next to the Commonwealth Bank. It is expected to become fully operational in 2009-10 supported by a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Commissions.

#### **5.4 Targets 2009-10**

- Develop a five year operational plan in response to corporate issues.
- Have the Alice Springs office fully operational with a range of enrolment, education and election services.
- Contribute to a joint Commission initiative to develop specialised on-line modules for the training of polling staff.
- Review the training and on-going support provided to seconded staff assigned co-ordinator positions in regional centres at elections.
- Complete the redevelopment of the NTEC's website.

## 6. FINANCIAL REPORT

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT OVERVIEW

For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) provides an independent service to the people of the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly (mandated), municipal and shire councils and other organisations (by appointment).

Key responsibilities include:

- Contributing to the maintenance of the Northern Territory electoral roll;
- Managing parliamentary and non-parliamentary elections including local government and fee for service elections;
- Delivering public electoral awareness programs;
- Providing advice and reports relating to electoral matters to the Legislative Assembly;
- Conducting electoral research; and
- Providing support to the Redistribution Committees which redistribute electoral boundaries.

### Financial Performance

During the year the agency's budget moved from \$1.685 million to \$3.165 million as a result of the following funding increases:

- \$1.30 million provided by Treasurer's Advance to cover operational and staff costs as a result of conducting the Legislative Assembly general election in August 2008;
- An additional \$100 000 provided by a Treasurer's Advance to cover the shortfall in funding for the inaugural shire and rural council elections in October 2008; and
- \$80 000 for the redevelopment of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission's internet site.

Overall income for the year was \$4.771 million and expenses incurred was \$4.450 million. This produced an operating surplus of \$321 000.

The additional income was derived from the following sources:

- \$904 000 in respect to the shire/rural council general elections, received from the Department of Local Government and Housing and individual shires;
- \$105 000 from the Australian Electoral Commission, as its contribution for the establishment and running of a joint electoral services centre in Alice Springs;
- \$550 000 of notional costs for the support provided by the Department of Business and Employment;
- \$31 000 in paid non-voter penalties issued for the Legislative Assembly General Election; and
- \$15 000 received for the conduct of fee-for-service elections and other miscellaneous receipts.

## CERTIFICATION OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

We certify that the attached financial statements for the Northern Territory Electoral Commission have been prepared from proper accounts and records in accordance with the prescribed format, the Financial Management Act and Treasurer's Directions.

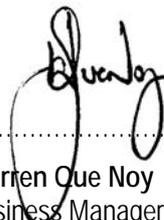
We further state that the information set out in the Operating Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Changes in Equity, Cash Flow Statement, and notes to and forming part of the financial statements, presents fairly the financial performance and cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2009 and the financial position on that date.

At the time of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render the particulars included in the financial statements misleading or inaccurate.



.....  
**Bill Shephard**  
Electoral Commissioner  
Chief Finance Officer

31 August 2009



.....  
**Warren Que Noy**  
Business Manager  
Accountable Officer

31 August 2009

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**OPERATING STATEMENT**  
**For the Year Ended 30 June 2009**

	NOTE	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>INCOME</b>			
Taxation Revenue			
<i>Grants and Subsidies Revenue</i>			
Current			
Capital			
Appropriation			
Output		3 165	1 853
Commonwealth			
Sales of Goods and Services <sup>(1)</sup>		1 051	283
Interest Revenue			
Goods and Services Received Free of Charge	4	550	336
Gain on Disposal of Assets	5	0	1
Other Income		5	3
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4 771</b>	<b>2 476</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Employee Expenses		1 992	1 297
<i>Administrative Expenses</i>			
Purchases of Goods and Services	6	1 895	697
Repairs and Maintenance		6	3
Depreciation and Amortisation	10	7	9
Other Administrative Expenses <sup>(2)</sup>		550	336
<i>Grants and Subsidies Expenses</i>			
Current			
Capital			
Community Service Obligations			
Interest Expenses			
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4 450</b>	<b>2 342</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>134</b>

*The Operating Statement is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.*

<sup>1</sup> Approx \$904 000 from the shire councils and the Department of Local Government and Housing towards the conduct of the 2008 shire elections, \$105 000 from the Australian Electoral Commission and approx \$31 000 in non-voter penalties.

<sup>2</sup> Includes DBE service charges.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION BALANCE SHEET

As at 30 June 2009

	NOTE	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<i>Current Assets</i>			
Cash and Deposits	7	663	61
Receivables	8	29	64
Inventories			
Advances and Investments			
Prepayments		64	0
Other Assets			
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		756	125
<i>Non-Current Assets</i>			
Receivables			
Advances and Investments			
Property, Plant and Equipment	10	40	30
Prepayments			
Other Assets			
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>		40	30
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		796	155
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<i>Current Liabilities</i>			
Deposits Held		1	0
Payables	11	(29)	(31)
Borrowings and Advances			
Provisions	12	(119)	(95)
Other Liabilities			
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		(147)	(126)
<i>Non-Current Liabilities</i>			
Borrowings and Advances			
Provisions	12	(44)	(26)
Other Liabilities			
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>		(44)	(26)
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		(191)	(152)
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		605	3
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Capital	13	0	281
Reserves			
Accumulated Funds		(605)	(284)
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		(605)	(3)

*The Balance Sheet is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.*

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY**  
For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

	NOTE	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>BALANCE OF EQUITY AT 1 JULY</b>		<u>3</u>	<u>(131)</u>
<i>Capital</i>	13		
Balance at 1 July		<u>(281)</u>	<u>(281)</u>
Equity Injections		281	0
Equity Withdrawals		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Balance at 30 June		0	(281)
<i>Reserves</i>			
Balance at 1 July		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Changes in Accounting Policies		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Correction of Prior Period Errors		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Increase/(Decrease) in Asset Revaluation Reserve		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Balance at 30 June		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
<i>Accumulated Funds</i>	13		
Balance at 1 July		<u>284</u>	<u>150</u>
Changes in Accounting Policies		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Correction of Prior Period Errors		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period		321	134
Gains/(Losses) Recognised Directly in Equity		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
Balance at 30 June		605	284
<b>BALANCE OF EQUITY AT 30 JUNE</b>		<u><u>605</u></u>	<u><u>3</u></u>
<b>Total Income and Expense Recognised Directly to Equity</b>		<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

*This Statement of Changes in Equity is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.*

# NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION

## CASH FLOW STATEMENT

For the year ended 30 June 2009

	NOTE	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<i>Operating Receipts</i>			
Taxes Received			
<i>Grants and Subsidies Received</i>			
Current			
Capital			
Appropriation			
Output		3 165	1 853
Commonwealth			
Receipts From Sales of Goods and Services		1 225	303
Interest Received			
<b>Total Operating Receipts</b>		4 390	2 156
<i>Operating Payments</i>			
Payments to Employees		(1 947)	(1 312)
Payments for Goods and Services		(2 105)	(770)
<i>Grants and Subsidies Paid</i>			
Current			
Capital			
Community Service Obligations			
Interest Paid			
<b>Total Operating Payments</b>		(4 052)	(2 082)
<b>Net Cash From/(Used In) Operating Activities</b>	14	338	74
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<i>Investing Payments</i>			
Purchases of Assets		(17)	(9)
Advances and Investing Payments			
<b>Total Investing Payments</b>		(17)	(9)
<b>Net Cash From/(Used In) Investing Activities</b>		(17)	(9)
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<i>Financing Receipts</i>			
Proceeds of Borrowings			
Deposits Received		0	(6)
<i>Equity Injections</i>			
Capital Appropriation	13		
Commonwealth Appropriation			
Other Equity Injections		281	0
<b>Total Financing Receipts</b>		281	(6)
<i>Financing Payments</i>			
Repayment of Borrowings			
Finance Lease Payments			
Equity Withdrawals			
<b>Total Financing Payments</b>		-	-
<b>Net Cash From/(Used In) Financing Activities</b>		281	(6)
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash Held		602	59
Cash at Beginning of Financial Year		61	2
<b>CASH AT END OF FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	7	663	61

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**INDEX OF NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**For the Year Ended 30 June 2009**

1. Objectives and Funding
2. Statement of Significant Accounting Policies
3. Operating Statement by Output Group

**INCOME**

4. Goods and Services Received Free of Charge
5. Gain on Disposal of Assets

**EXPENSES**

6. Purchases of Goods and Services

**ASSETS**

7. Cash and Deposits
8. Receivables
9. Inventories
10. Property, Plant and Equipment

**LIABILITIES**

11. Payables
12. Provisions

**EQUITY**

13. Equity

**OTHER DISCLOSURES**

14. Notes to the Cash Flow Statement
15. Financial Instruments
16. Commitments
17. Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets
18. Events Subsequent to Balance Date
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**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**For the Year Ended 30 June 2009**

**1. OBJECTIVES AND FUNDING**

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission (the 'Commission') was established in March 2004 to support government by providing a fair, impartial and professional electoral service and ensuring there is an opportunity for the people of the Northern Territory to participate in free and democratic elections. The Commission is responsible for conducting elections for the Legislative Assembly, municipal and shire councils (if appointed), and other organisations in an efficient and cost-effective manner, consistent with legislative requirements.

**2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

**a) Basis of Accounting**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Financial Management Act and related Treasurer's Directions. The Financial Management Act requires the Northern Territory Electoral Commission to prepare financial statements for the year ended 30 June based on the form determined by the Treasurer. The form of Agency financial statements is to include:

- (i) a Certification of the Financial Statements;
- (ii) an Operating Statement;
- (iii) a Balance Sheet;
- (iv) a Statement of Changes in Equity;
- (v) a Cash Flow Statement; and
- (vi) applicable explanatory notes to the financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared using the accrual basis of accounting, which recognises the effect of financial transactions and events when they occur, rather than when cash is paid out or received. As part of the preparation of the financial statements, all intra Agency transactions and balances have been eliminated.

Except where stated, the financial statements have also been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention.

The form of the Agency financial statements is also consistent with the requirements of Australian Accounting Standards. The effects of all relevant new and revised Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) that are effective for the current annual reporting period have been evaluated.

**b) Agency and Territory Items**

The financial statements of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission include income, expenses, assets, liabilities and equity over which the Northern Territory Electoral Commission has control (Agency items). Certain items, while managed by the Agency, are controlled and recorded by the Territory rather than the Agency (Territory items). Territory items are recognised and recorded in the Central Holding Authority as discussed below.

***Central Holding Authority***

The Central Holding Authority is the 'parent body' that represents the Government's ownership interest in Government controlled entities.

The Central Holding Authority also records all Territory items, such as income, expenses, assets and liabilities controlled by the Government and managed by Agencies on behalf of the Government. The main Territory item is Territory income, which includes taxation and royalty revenue,

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**For the Year Ended 30 June 2009**

Commonwealth general purpose funding (such as GST revenue), fines, and statutory fees and charges.

The Central Holding Authority also holds certain Territory assets not assigned to Agencies as well as certain Territory liabilities that are not practical or effective to assign to individual Agencies such as unfunded superannuation and long service leave.

The Central Holding Authority recognises and records all Territory items, and as such, these items are not included in the Agency's financial statements. However, as the Agency is accountable for certain Territory items managed on behalf of Government, these items have been separately disclosed in note 24 - Schedule of Territory Items.

**c) Comparatives**

Where necessary, comparative information for the 2007-08 financial year has been reclassified to provide consistency with current year disclosures.

**d) Presentation and Rounding of Amounts**

Amounts in the financial statements and notes to the financial statements are presented in Australian dollars and have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, with amounts of \$500 or less being rounded down to zero.

**e) Changes in Accounting Policies**

There have been no changes to accounting policies adopted in 2008-09 as a result of management decisions.

**f) Accounting Judgements and Estimates**

The preparation of the financial report requires the making of judgements and estimates that affect the recognised amounts of assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses and the disclosure of contingent liabilities. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances, the results of which form the basis of making the judgements about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

**g) Goods and Services Tax**

Income, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of Goods and Services Tax (GST), except where the amount of GST incurred on a purchase of goods and services is not recoverable from the Australian Tax Office (ATO). In these circumstances the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated with the amount of GST included. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included as part of receivables or payables in the Balance Sheet.

Cash flows are included in the Cash Flow Statement on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO are classified as operating cash flows. Commitments and contingencies are disclosed net of the amount of GST recoverable or payable unless otherwise specified.

**h) Income Recognition**

Income encompasses both revenue and gains.

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**For the Year Ended 30 June 2009**

Income is recognised at the fair value of the consideration received, exclusive of the amount of goods and services tax (GST). Exchanges of goods or services of the same nature and value without any cash consideration being exchanged are not recognised as income.

***Grants and Other Contributions***

Grants, donations, gifts and other non-reciprocal contributions are recognised as revenue when the Agency obtains control over the assets comprising the contributions. Control is normally obtained upon receipt.

Contributions are recognised at their fair value. Contributions of services are only recognised when a fair value can be reliably determined and the services would be purchased if not donated.

***Appropriation***

Output Appropriation is the operating payment to each agency for the outputs they provide and is calculated as the net cost of Agency outputs after taking into account funding from Agency income. It does not include any allowance for major non-cash costs such as depreciation.

Commonwealth appropriation is new to 2008-09, and follows from the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations. It has resulted in Special Purpose Payments and National Partnership payments being made by the Commonwealth Treasury to state treasuries, in a manner similar to arrangements for GST payments. These payments are received by Treasury on behalf of the Central Holding Authority and then on-passed to the relevant agencies as Commonwealth Appropriation.

Revenue in respect of Appropriations is recognised in the period in which the Agency gains control of the funds.

***Sale of Goods***

Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised (net of returns, discounts and allowances) when:

- the significant risks and rewards of ownership of the goods have transferred to the buyer;
- the Agency retains neither continuing managerial involvement to the degree usually associated with ownership nor effective control over the goods sold;
- the amount of revenue can be reliably measured;
- it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Agency; and
- the costs incurred or to be incurred in respect of the transaction can be measured reliably.

***Rendering of Services***

Revenue from rendering services is recognised by reference to the stage of completion of the contract. The revenue is recognised when:

- the amount of revenue, stage of completion and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the entity.

***Interest Revenue***

Interest revenue is recognised as it accrues, taking into account the effective yield on the financial asset.

***Goods and Services Received Free of Charge***

Goods and services received free of charge are recognised as revenue when a fair value can be reliably determined and the resource would have been purchased if it had not been donated. Use of the resource is recognised as an expense.

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
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*Disposal of Assets*

A gain or loss on disposal of assets is included as a gain or loss on the date control of the asset passes to the buyer, usually when an unconditional contract of sale is signed. The gain or loss on disposal is calculated as the difference between the carrying amount of the asset at the time of disposal and the net proceeds on disposal. Refer also to note 5.

*Contributions of Assets*

Contributions of assets and contributions to assist in the acquisition of assets, being non-reciprocal transfers, are recognised, unless otherwise determined by Government, as gains when the Agency obtains control of the asset or contribution. Contributions are recognised at the fair value received or receivable.

**i) Repairs and Maintenance Expense**

Funding is received for repairs and maintenance works associated with Agency assets as part of Output Revenue. Costs associated with repairs and maintenance works on Agency assets are expensed as incurred.

**j) Depreciation and Amortisation Expense**

Items of property, plant and equipment, including buildings but excluding land, have limited useful lives and are depreciated or amortised using the straight-line method over their estimated useful lives.

Amortisation applies in relation to intangible non-current assets with limited useful lives and is calculated and accounted for in a similar manner to depreciation.

Assets are depreciated or amortised from the date of acquisition or from the time an asset is completed and held ready for use.

**k) Interest Expense**

Interest expenses include interest and finance lease charges. Interest expenses are expensed in the period in which they are incurred.

**l) Cash and Deposits**

For the purposes of the Balance Sheet and the Cash Flow Statement, cash includes cash on hand, cash at bank and cash equivalents. Cash equivalents are highly liquid short-term investments that are readily convertible to cash. Cash at bank includes monies held in the Accountable Officer's Trust Account (AOTA) that are ultimately payable to the beneficial owner – refer also to note 19.

**m) Receivables**

Receivables include accounts receivable and other receivables and are recognised at fair value less any allowance for impairment losses.

The allowance for impairment losses represents the amount of receivables the Agency estimates are likely to be uncollectible and are considered doubtful. Analyses of the age of the receivables that are past due as at the reporting date are disclosed in an aging schedule under credit risk in Note 18 Financial Instruments. Reconciliation of changes in the allowance accounts is also presented. Accounts receivable are generally settled within 30 days and other receivables within 30 days.

**n) Property, Plant and Equipment**

**Acquisitions**

All items of property, plant and equipment with a cost, or other value, equal to or greater than \$5,000

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**For the Year Ended 30 June 2009**

are recognised in the year of acquisition and depreciated as outlined below. Items of property, plant and equipment below the \$5,000 threshold are expensed in the year of acquisition.

The construction cost of property, plant and equipment includes the cost of materials and direct labour, and an appropriate proportion of fixed and variable overheads.

#### **Complex Assets**

Major items of plant and equipment comprising a number of components that have different useful lives, are accounted for as separate assets. The components may be replaced during the useful life of the complex asset.

#### **Subsequent Additional Costs**

Costs incurred on property, plant and equipment subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised when it is probable that future economic benefits in excess of the originally assessed performance of the asset will flow to the Agency in future years. Where these costs represent separate components of a complex asset, they are accounted for as separate assets and are separately depreciated over their expected useful lives.

#### **Construction (Work in Progress)**

As part of Financial Management Framework, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure is responsible for managing general government capital works projects on a whole of Government basis. Therefore appropriation for the Northern Territory Electoral Commission's capital works is provided directly to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and the cost of construction work in progress is recognised as an asset of that Department. Once completed, capital works assets are transferred to the Agency.

### **o) Revaluations and Impairment**

#### ***Revaluation of Assets***

Subsequent to initial recognition, assets belonging to the following classes of non-current assets are revalued with sufficient regularity to ensure that the carrying amount of these assets does not differ materially from their fair value at reporting date:

- Land;
- Buildings;
- Infrastructure Assets;
- Heritage and Cultural Assets;
- Biological Assets; and
- Intangibles.

Fair value is the amount for which an asset could be exchanged, or liability settled, between knowledgeable, willing parties in an arms length transaction.

Plant and equipment are stated at historical cost less depreciation, which is deemed to equate to fair value.

#### ***Impairment of Assets***

An asset is said to be impaired when the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount.

Non-current physical and intangible Agency assets are assessed for indicators of impairment on an annual basis. If an indicator of impairment exists, the Agency determines the asset's recoverable amount. The asset's recoverable amount is determined as the higher of the asset's depreciated

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replacement cost and fair value less costs to sell. Any amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds the recoverable amount is recorded as an impairment loss.

Impairment losses are recognised in the Operating Statement unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount. Where the asset is measured at a revalued amount, the impairment loss is offset against the Asset Revaluation Reserve for that class of asset to the extent that an available balance exists in the Asset Revaluation Reserve.

In certain situations, an impairment loss may subsequently be reversed. Where an impairment loss is subsequently reversed, the carrying amount of the asset is increased to the revised estimate of its recoverable amount. A reversal of an impairment loss is recognised in the Operating Statement as income, unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount, in which case the impairment reversal results in an increase in the Asset Revaluation Reserve. Note 16 provides additional information in relation to the Asset Revaluation Reserve.

**p) Leased Assets**

Leases under which the Agency assumes substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership of an asset are classified as finance leases. Other leases are classified as operating leases.

*Finance Leases*

Finance leases are capitalised. A leased asset and a lease liability equal to the present value of the minimum lease payments are recognised at the inception of the lease.

Lease payments are allocated between the principal component of the lease liability and the interest expense.

*Operating Leases*

Operating lease payments made at regular intervals throughout the term are expensed when the payments are due, except where an alternative basis is more representative of the pattern of benefits to be derived from the leased property. Lease incentives under an operating lease of a building or office space is recognised as an integral part of the consideration for the use of the leased asset. Lease incentives are to be recognised as a deduction of the lease expenses over the term of the lease.

**q) Payables**

Liabilities for accounts payable and other amounts payable are carried at cost which is the fair value of the consideration to be paid in the future for goods and services received, whether or not billed to the Agency. Accounts payable are normally settled within 30 days.

**r) Employee Benefits**

Provision is made for employee benefits accumulated as a result of employees rendering services up to the reporting date. These benefits include wages and salaries and recreation leave. Liabilities arising in respect of wages and salaries and recreation leave and other employee benefit liabilities that fall due within twelve months of reporting date are classified as current liabilities and are measured at amounts expected to be paid. Non-current employee benefit liabilities that fall due after twelve months of the reporting date are measured at present value, calculated using the Government long term bond rate.

No provision is made for sick leave, which is non-vesting, as the anticipated pattern of future sick leave to be taken is less than the entitlement accruing in each reporting period.

Employee benefit expenses are recognised on a net basis in respect of the following categories:

- wages and salaries, non-monetary benefits, recreation leave, sick leave and other leave entitlements; and
- other types of employee benefits.

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
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As part of the Financial Management Framework, the Central Holding Authority assumes the long service leave liabilities of Government Agencies, including the Northern Territory Electoral Commission and as such no long service leave liability is recognised in Agency financial statements.

**s) Superannuation**

Employees' superannuation entitlements are provided through the:

- NT Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme (NTGPASS);
- Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS); or
- Non-government employee nominated schemes for those employees commencing on or after 10 August 1999.

The Agency makes superannuation contributions on behalf of its employees to the Central Holding Authority or non-government employee nominated schemes. Superannuation liabilities related to government superannuation schemes are held by the Central Holding Authority and as such are not recognised in Agency financial statements.

**t) Contributions by and Distributions to Government**

The Agency may receive contributions from Government where the Government is acting as owner of the Agency. Conversely, the Agency may make distributions to Government. In accordance with the Financial Management Act and Treasurer's Directions, certain types of contributions and distributions, including those relating to administrative restructures, have been designated as contributions by, and distributions to, Government. These designated contributions and distributions are treated by the Agency as adjustments to equity.

The Statement of Changes in Equity and note 16 provide additional information in relation to contributions by, and distributions to, Government.

**u) Commitments**

Disclosures in relation to capital and other commitments, including lease commitments are shown at note 19 and are consistent with the requirements contained in AASB 101, AASB 116 and AASB 117.

Commitments are those contracted as at 30 June where the amount of the future commitment can be reliably measured.

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

**3. OPERATING STATEMENT BY OUTPUT GROUP**

As the Commission only has the one Output Group, Electoral Services, reference should be made to the Commission's operating statement.

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>4. GOODS AND SERVICES RECEIVED FREE OF CHARGE</b>		
Business and Employment	550	336
Internal Audits and Reviews		
	550	336
<b>5. GAIN ON DISPOSAL OF ASSETS</b>		
Net proceeds from the disposal of non-current assets	0	1
Less: Carrying value of non-current assets disposed	(0)	(0)
Gain on the disposal of non-current assets	0	1

**6. PURCHASES OF GOODS AND SERVICES**

The net surplus/(deficit) has been arrived at after charging the following expenses:

**Goods and Services Expenses(\*):**

Consultants (1)	24	6
Advertising (2)	1	0
Marketing and Promotion (3)	279	82
Document Production	98	10
		0
Legal Expenses (4)	0	0
Recruitment (5)	0	3
Training and Study	3	5
Official Duty Fares	251	28
Travelling Allowance	57	8
Agent Service Arrangements	466	14
		2
Communications	78	40
IT Charges	105	63
Insurance Premiums	0	20
Other Equipment Expenses	32	18
Motor Vehicle Expenses	118	53

(\*): Note: Increased expenditure due to general, shire council and by-elections.

(1) Includes marketing, promotion and IT consultants.

(2) Does not include recruitment advertising or marketing and promotion advertising.

(3) Includes advertising for marketing and promotion but excludes marketing and promotion consultants' expenses, which are incorporated in the consultants' category.

(4) Includes legal fees, claim and settlement costs.

(5) Includes recruitment related advertising costs.

**7. CASH AND DEPOSITS**

Cash on Hand	1	11
Cash at Bank	662	50
On Call or Short Term Deposits		
Total Cash and Deposits	663	61

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>8. RECEIVABLES</b>		
Current		
Accounts Receivable	10	50
Less: Allowance for Impairment Losses	(0)	(0)
	10	50
Interest Receivables		
GST Receivables	19	14
Other Receivables	0	0
	19	14
Non-Current		
Other Receivables		
Total Receivables	29	64
<b>9. INVENTORIES</b>		
General Inventories		
At cost		
At net realisable value		
Inventories Held for Distribution		
At cost		
At current replacement cost		
Total Inventories	0	0
<b>10. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT</b>		
Plant and Equipment		
At Fair Value	92	75
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(52)	(45)
	40	30
Total Property, Plant and Equipment	40	30

**Property, Plant and Equipment Valuations**

The fair value of these assets was determined based on existing restrictions on asset use. Where reliable market values were not available, the fair value of Agency assets was based on their depreciated replacement cost.

**Impairment of Property, Plant and Equipment**

Agency property, plant and equipment assets were assessed for impairment as at 30 June 2009. No impairment adjustments were required as a result of this review.

**10. cont'd**

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

A reconciliation of the carrying amount of property, plant and equipment at the beginning and end of 2008-09 is set out below

	Plant & equipment \$'000
Carrying Amount at 1 July 2008	30
Additions	17
Disposals	-
Depreciation	(7)
Carrying Amount at 30 June 2009	40

A reconciliation of the carrying amount of property, plant and equipment at the beginning and end of 2007-08 is set out below

	Plant & equipment \$'000
Carrying Amount at 1 July 2007	30
Additions	9
Disposals	-
Depreciation	(9)
Carrying Amount at 30 June 2008	30

## 11. PAYABLES

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Accounts Payable	(16)	(24)
Accrued Expenses	(13)	(7)
Other Payables		
<b>Total Payables</b>	<b>(29)</b>	<b>(31)</b>

## 12. PROVISIONS

### Current

#### *Employee Benefits*

Recreation Leave	(90)	(69)
Leave Loading	(11)	(10)
Other Employee Benefits	3	(1)

#### Other Current Provisions

Other Provisions	(21)	(15)
	<b>(119)</b>	<b>(95)</b>

### Non-Current

#### *Employee Benefits*

Recreation Leave	(44)	(26)
Other Provisions		

#### **Total Provisions**

	<b>(44)</b>	<b>(26)</b>
	<b>(163)</b>	<b>(121)</b>

*(The Agency employed 12 employees as at 30 June 2009 (11 employees as at 30 June 2008).*

**NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>13. EQUITY</b>		
Equity represents the residual interest in the net assets of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission. The Government's ownership interest in the Northern Territory Electoral Commission is held in the Central Holding Authority as described in note 2(b).		
<b>Capital</b>		
Balance as at 1 July	(281)	(281)
<i>Equity Injections</i>		
Capital Appropriation	281	0
<i>Equity Withdrawals</i>		
Capital Withdrawal	0	0
Equity Transfers Out		
<b>Balance as at 30 June</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(281)</b>
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>		
Balance as at 1 July	284	150
Surplus / (Deficit) for the Period	321	134
Changes in Accounting Policies		
Correction of Prior Period Errors		
Gains/(losses) recognised Directly to Equity		
<b>Balance as at 30 June</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>BALANCE OF EQUITY AT 30 JUNE</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>3</b>

**14. NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT**

**Reconciliation of Cash**

The total of Agency Cash and Deposits of \$663,000 recorded in the Balance Sheet is consistent with that recorded as 'cash' in the Cash Flow Statement.

**Reconciliation of Net Surplus/(Deficit) to Net Cash From Operating Activities**

<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	321	134
<i>Non-Cash Items:</i>		
Depreciation and Amortisation	7	9
Asset Write-Offs/Write-Downs		
Asset Donations/Gifts		
(Gain)/Loss on Disposal of Assets		
<i>Changes in Assets and Liabilities:</i>		
Decrease/(Increase) in Receivables	34	(47)
Decrease/(Increase) in Inventories		
Decrease/(Increase) in Prepayments	(64)	0
Decrease/(Increase) in Other Assets	0	0
(Decrease)/Increase in Payables	(2)	(6)
(Decrease)/Increase in Provision for Employee Benefits	36	(19)
(Decrease)/Increase in Other Provisions	6	3
(Decrease)/Increase in Other Liabilities		
<b>Net Cash From Operating Activities</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>74</b>

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**15. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial instruments held by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission include cash and deposits, receivables, payables and finance leases. The Northern Territory Electoral Commission has limited exposure to financial risks as discussed below.

*(a) Categorisation of Financial Instruments*

The carrying amounts of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission financial assets and liabilities by category are disclosed in the table below.

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
<b>Financial Assets</b>		
Cash and deposits	663	62

*(b) Credit Risk*

The Agency has limited credit risk exposure (risk of default). In respect of any dealings with organisations external to Government, the Agency has adopted a policy of only dealing with credit worthy organisations and obtaining sufficient collateral or other security where appropriate, as a means of mitigating the risk of financial loss from defaults.

The carrying amount of financial assets recorded in the financial statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents the Agency's maximum exposure to credit risk without taking account of the value of any collateral or other security obtained.

Receivables

Receivable balances are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that exposure to bad debts is not significant. A reconciliation and ageing analysis of receivables is presented below.

	2009 \$	2008 \$
<b>Ageing of Receivables</b>		
Not Overdue	10 000	50 000
Overdue for less than 30 Days		
Overdue for 30 to 60 Days		
Overdue for more than 60 Days		
<b>Total Receivables</b>	<u>10 000</u>	<u>50 000</u>

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(c) *Liquidity risk*

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Agency will not be able to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. The Agency's approach to managing liquidity is to ensure that it will always have sufficient liquidity to meet its liabilities when they fall due.

The following tables detail the undiscounted cash flows payable by the Agency by remaining contractual maturity for its financial liabilities. It should be noted that as these are undiscounted, totals may not reconcile to the carrying amounts presented in the Balance Sheet.

**2009 Maturity analysis for financial liabilities**

	Variable Interest	Fixed Interest Rate			Non Interest Bearing	Total	Weighted Average
		Less than a Year	1 to 5 Years	More than 5 Years			
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	
Deposits Held Payables					29	100	
Borrowings and Advances							
Finance Lease Liabilities							
<b>Total Financial Liabilities:</b>					29	100	

**2008 Maturity analysis for financial liabilities**

	Variable Interest	Fixed Interest Rate			Non Interest Bearing	Total	Weighted Average
		Less than a Year	1 to 5 Years	More than 5 Years			
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	
Deposits Held Payables					31	100	
Borrowings and Advances							
Finance Lease Liabilities							
<b>Total Financial Liabilities:</b>					31	100	

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*(d) Market Risk*

Market risk is the risk that the fair value of future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. It comprises interest rate risk, price risk and currency risk.

i) Interest Rate Risk

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission is not exposed to interest rate risk, as Agency financial assets and financial liabilities are non-interest bearing. Finance lease arrangements are established on a fixed interest rate and as such do not expose the Northern Territory Electoral Commission to interest rate risk.

ii) Price Risk

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission is not exposed to price risk as the Northern Territory Electoral Commission does not hold units in unit trusts.

iii) Currency Risk

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission is not exposed to currency risk as the Northern Territory Electoral Commission does not hold borrowings denominated in foreign currencies or transactional currency exposures arising from purchases in a foreign currency.

*(e) Net Fair Value*

The carrying amount of financial assets and financial liabilities recorded in the financial statements approximates their respective net fair values. Where differences exist, these are not material.

**16. COMMITMENTS**

(i) Capital Expenditure Commitments

Capital expenditure commitments primarily relate to the installation and fit-out of the new electoral services centre at the Yeperenye Shopping Centre in Alice Springs. Total commitment is internally funded with no obligations against on-going operational costs. Capital expenditure commitments contracted for at balance date out not recognised as liabilities are payable as follows:

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
	<u>\$'000</u>	<u>\$'000</u>
Within one year	213	0
Later than one year and not later than five years		
Later than five years		
	<u>213</u>	<u>0</u>

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**17. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS**

a) Contingent liabilities

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission had no contingent liabilities or contingent assets as at 30 June 2009 or 30 June 2008.

b) Contingent assets

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission had no contingent liabilities or contingent assets as at 30 June 2009 or 30 June 2008.

**18. EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO BALANCE DATE**

No events have arisen between the end of the financial year and the date of this report that require adjustment to, or disclosure in these financial statements.

**19. ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER'S TRUST ACCOUNT**

In accordance with section 7 of the Financial Management Act, an Accountable Officer's Trust Account has been established for the receipt of money to be held in trust. A summary of activity is shown below:

Nature of Trust Money	Opening Balance 1 July 2008	Receipts \$	Payments \$	Closing Balance 30 June 2009 \$
Nomination Money	0 <sup>(*)</sup>	40 700	40 600	100
	0	40 700	40 600	100

\* The Opening Balance differs from the published 2007/08 Annual Report amount of \$6000 due to an incorrect carry forward figure being used; the correct 'Closing Balance as at 30 June 2008' was \$0.

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**20. WRITE-OFFS, POSTPONEMENTS AND WAIVERS**

	Agency		Agency	
	2009 \$'000	No. of Trans.	2008 \$'000	No. of Trans.
<b>Write-offs, Postponements and Waivers Under the</b>				
<b><i>Financial Management Act</i></b>				
Represented by:				
<u>Amounts written off, waived and postponed by Delegates</u>				
Irrecoverable amounts payable to the Territory or an Agency written off	1	4		
Losses or deficiencies of money written off				
Public property written off				
Waiver or postponement of right to receive or recover money or property				
<b>Total written off, waived and postponed</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>		