



# 2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

## CITY OF DARWIN ELECTION REPORT





## TIMETABLE

### 2017 NT Council elections

Saturday, 26 August 2017

Date	Time	
Friday 14 July		Nominations open
Tuesday 25 July	5:00 pm	Close of electoral roll
Thursday 3 August	12:00 noon	Close of nominations
Friday 4 August	12:00 noon	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Monday 7 August		Postal vote mail-out commences
Monday 14 August	8:00 am	Early voting commences
	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 22 August	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Thursday 24 August	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Friday 25 August	6:00 pm	Early voting ceases
Saturday 26 August		Election day
	8:00 am	Election day voting commences
	6:00 pm	Election day voting ceases
		Mobile voting ceases
		Primary counts of ordinary, postal and early votes commence
		Primary counts of postal, mobile and early votes commence
Monday 28 August	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Thursday 31 August	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Friday 1 September	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
		Distribution of preferences
Monday 4 September	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

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## BACKGROUND

### Election

- This is the second Local Government (LG) general election under section 85 of the *Local Government Act* (LGA). Amendments to the LGA deferred the election from March 2016 to August 2017. LG general elections are now held 12 months after the Legislative Assembly (LA) election.
- This is the first LG general election that all electors had the option to vote by post or vote early. This was due to legislative change that removed the criteria to lodge an early or postal vote.
- The Commissioner of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is the returning officer for local government general elections.
- Susan Whyte was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the City of Darwin, 2017 NT Council elections.
- Electronic mark-off system (eLAPPS) was used at all voting centres.
- City of Darwin were sent a breakdown of the estimated cost of the election in December 2015.
- An election charter, **detailing the NTEC's service commitments**, was finalised on 4 May 2017 and sent to the council. The document was also available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the City of Darwin and the NTEC was entered into on 18 April 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

### Council

The City of Darwin consists four wards: Chan, Lyons, Richardson and Waters.

The council comprises one elected Lord Mayor and 12 elected aldermen; three aldermen in each ward.

As per the SLA, City of Darwin provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections.

- Casuarina Library community room as an early voting centre.
- The theatrette at the City of Darwin council office as an early voting centre. (City of Darwin requested that the Council office be used as an additional early voting centre in the City).

### Boundary changes

There were no gazetted changes to the boundaries or the council ward structure from the 2015 review of electoral representation.

## ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July 2017 at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 50,100 electors enrolled for the City of Darwin. This was an increase of 15 per cent on the enrolment of 42,583 at the 2012 General elections.

### City of Darwin enrolment numbers by ward

COUNCIL	WARD	ENROLMENT
City of Darwin	Chan	11,687
	Lyons	14,401
	Richardson	13,557
	Waters	10,455
TOTAL		50,100

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

### Campaign

The public awareness campaign for the 2017 NT Council elections included enrolment and voting information (early, postal, remote and election day) disseminated across social media, television, radio, councils, LGANT, the Department of Housing and Community Development, as well as print and digital platforms. The public awareness campaign began in May and intensified from 30 June until election day on Saturday 26 August.

### Website

The 2017 NT Council elections website was launched in early June and this provided comprehensive information for candidates and voters. It also hosted dedicated election results pages, included details on vote counting, and showed all remote, early and election day voting centre information. The website remains live for a number of months following the election.

### Newsletter

An election newsletter was emailed regularly to stakeholders including councils and candidates, from 5 May with the final newsletter emailed on 27 August. In total, 12 newsletters and five supplementary emails were sent during this period. The newsletters were also available on the NTEC website with links shared on Facebook and Twitter.

### Advertising – print, radio, television

Three advertisements were developed for airing on television, radio, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter: enrol and close of roll (15 secs); early, election day and formal voting (15 secs and 30 secs). The audio versions of these advertisements were interpreted into nine Aboriginal languages and aired across the Northern Territory through the radio stations appropriate to the language group. These advertisements were also available on the **NTEC website, NTEC's** YouTube channel and were heavily promoted through social media.

Print advertising promoting enrolment and providing election information appeared in the NT News and Off the Leash magazine.

Online promotion of these ads also took place with Off the Leash. There was also an extensive digital marketing campaign about enrolment, postal and early voting, election day and formal voting that ran from 7 June through to election day, 26 August.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the NT News.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and voting through 39 interviews with Northern Territory media including ABC Darwin and Alice Springs, Channel Nine, Territory FM, MIX104.9, Aboriginal Broadcasting Network, CAAMA radio and the NT News.

### Call centre

A call centre was established on Wednesday 2 August and ran until Monday 28 August. Staff assisted electors with a variety of election enquiries during this period.

### Call centre enquiries

ENQUIRY TYPE	ENQUIRY NUMBERS
Total phone calls	3,254
Emails to ntec@nt.gov.au	1,379
Non-voter excuses lodged	615
Enrolment	694
Postal voting	462

### Candidate information sessions

A candidate information session was conducted on 12 July 2017 at City of Darwin chambers. The information session attracted a large turnout of potential candidates. It was estimated that there were about 25 attendees.

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

### Email and SMS

Email and SMS was used to contact City of Darwin electors, whom had provided these details on their enrolment form. A total of 17,906 emails were sent to electors advising the locations of early and election-day voting centres. At 10:00 am on election day a voting reminder SMS was sent to 15,924 electors **who hadn't cast an early or postal vote**.

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 36 accepted nominations for alderman across the four wards and 15 accepted nominations for Lord Mayor.

Eight nominations received were deemed ineligible and therefore rejected.

The declaration of nominations took place at the NTEC Darwin office on Friday 4 August. This event was attended by the general public, nominees, council representatives and the media. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate.

### Summary of accepted nominations/candidates for the City of Darwin

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Lord Mayor (1 position)	Laurel NEWTON-THOMPSON
	Simon NIBLOCK
	Braedon EARLEY
	Jack Childers HENDERSON
	Tilak RAJ
	Paul MASTEN
	Greg STRETTLES
	Kon VATSKALIS
	Katrina FONG LIM
	Paul EUSTANCE
	Gary HASLETT
	Mick PALMER
	Sue FRASER-ADAMS
	Nim JAYAWARDHANA
Jon DAVIS	
Chan Ward (3 positions)	Peter PANGQUEE
	Robin KNOX
	Emma YOUNG
	Nathan LAND
	Paul EUSTANCE
	Michael TSANGARIS
Ryan NEVE	

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Lyons Ward (3 positions available)	Paul MASTEN
	Sherry CULLEN
	Laurel NEWTON-THOMPSON
	Simon NIBLOCK
	Des FONG
	Dean DEMPSEY
	Carol PHAYER
	Mick PALMER
	Jon DAVIS
	Sue FRASER-ADAMS
	Emily FORD
	Jack Childers HENDERSON
	Vikki MCLEOD
	Hayley BARICH
	Braedon EARLEY
Greg STRETTLES	
Richardson Ward (3 positions available)	Sam WILKS
	Rebecca WANT DE ROWE
	Lia GILL
	Ian HOLLINGSWORTH
	Wayne KEEPING
	Edwin JOSEPH
	Jimmy BOUHORIS
	George LAMBRINIDIS
Waters Ward (3 positions available)	Justine GLOVER
	Andrew John ARTHUR
	Gary HASLETT
	Tilak RAJ
	Robin LAWRENCE

#### Electronic voter mark-off

An electronic voter mark-off system is now used in all voting centres across the Northern Territory. The system records when someone has voted anywhere in the NT in real time. The voter mark-off system also alleviates the necessity to have paper certified lists therefore improving efficiencies in voting centres when finding voters on the electoral roll.

#### Early voting centres (EVCs)

Legislative changes in 2015 allows all electors the option to vote early without the need to meet any eligibility criteria. Overall there is a trend towards voting early across the Northern Territory and Australia. Early voting services were provided at the City of Darwin Council office, Casuarina Library and Mitchell Street Darwin from 14 August to 25 August 2017 (including Saturday 19 August). Votes for City of Darwin were also issued at other early voting centres across the Territory.

#### Votes issued at early voting centres for City of Darwin | 2017 & 2012 elections

COUNCIL	2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS	2012 GENERAL ELECTIONS
Lord Mayor	11,779	3,592
Chan Ward	2,593	787
Lyons Ward	3,439	900
Richardson Ward	3,656	1,200
Waters Ward	2,091	700

These figures show a 69 per cent increase in early voting from the 2012 General elections, where electors were required to meet eligibility criteria.

## Postal voting

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

Postal votes admitted to the count are contained in a declaration envelope. There is a slight difference in the numbers admitted to the count and the actual counted figure as there is no guarantee that the returned declaration envelope contains a ballot paper.

A number of electors who applied for a postal vote ultimately decided to vote in person. There was a 43 per cent increase in the number of postal votes compared to the 2012 General elections.

### Postal votes issued / admitted to the count | 2017 & 2012 elections

COUNCIL	2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS		2012 GENERAL ELECTIONS	
	ISSUED	ADMITTED TO COUNT	ISSUED	ADMITTED TO COUNT
Lord Mayor	1,759	1,505	1,477	1,006
Chan Ward	469	331	354	240
Lyons Ward	719	465	462	295
Richardson Ward	591	420	320	234
Waters Ward	400	289	341	236

## Urban institution voting

The urban institution voting team visited Darwin Private Hospital, Juninga Nursing Home, Pearl Retirement Resort, Royal Darwin Hospital and Tiwi Garden Aged Care. Electors in Darwin prison, at the request of the Department of Correctional Services, voted by post.

### Votes taken for the City of Darwin at urban institutions

Council	Urban institution votes taken
Lord Mayor	165
Chan Ward	32
Lyons Ward	63
Richardson Ward	45
Waters Ward	25

## Election day voting centres

Election day was Saturday, 26 August 2017 with voting centres open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. On election day, voters could vote at any voting centre within the City of Darwin.

### Election day voting centres

Darwin City: 82 Mitchell Street, cnr Mitchell and McLachlan Sts
Karama: <b>O'Loughlin Catholic College</b> , 70 Mueller Rd
Leanyer: Primary School, 114 Leanyer Dr
Ludmilla: Primary School, 41 Bagot Rd
Moil: Primary School, Moil Cres
Nightcliff: Middle School, 90 Aralia St
Parap: Primary School, Urquhart St
Sanderson: Middle School, Matthews Rd, Malak
Stuart Park: Primary School, cnr Nudl and Ashley Sts
Tiwi: Dripstone Middle School, Delamere St

The number of election day voting centres decreased by three compared to the 2012 General elections. The reduction is due to the growing trend of electors voting early. The decrease in election day voting centres was agreed to by City of Darwin with details outlined in the SLA.



Votes issued for the City of Darwin at election day voting centres

COUNCIL	LORD MAYOR	CHAN WARD	LYONS WARD	RICHARDSON WARD	WATERS WARD
Darwin city	2,182	114	1,878	119	71
Karama	2,497	60	38	142	2,257
Leanyer	2,466	38	38	2,278	112
Ludmilla	728	383	142	48	155
Moil	1,573	1,043	27	394	109
Nightcliff	2,918	2,702	67	110	39
Parap	2,188	233	1,779	88	88
Sanderson	1,991	51	27	110	1,803
Stuart Park	1,243	34	1,169	21	19
Tiwi	2,546	96	46	2,346	58
TOTALS	20,332	4,754	5,211	5,656	4,711

Early, postal, urban institution and declaration votes counted, all wards

LOCATION	VOTES COUNTED
Alice Springs EVC	69
Tennant Creek EVC	9
Katherine EVC	49
Litchfield EVC	132
Casuarina EVC	6,363
Darwin EVC	3,783
Darwin Council EVC	1,357
Urban institution	185
Postal votes	1,505
Declaration votes	18

Of the votes cast before election day, 76 per cent were either cast at the Casuarina early voting centre (48 per cent) or Darwin early voting centre (28 per cent). Reducing the number of early voting centres in the Darwin CBD may need to be considered for future elections.

Voter participation by ward

A comparison of votes cast for the 2017 and 2012 events is detailed below.

2017

City of Darwin	Enrolment at 25 July 2017	Number of formal votes	Number of informal votes	Total number of votes
Chan Ward	11,687	7,151	546	7,697
Lyons Ward	14,687	8,092	1,086	9,178
Richardson Ward	13,557	8,987	782	9,769
Waters Ward	10,455	6,647	461	7,108
Lord Mayor	50,100	30,202	3,509	33,711

2012

City of Darwin	Enrolment at 21 Feb 2012	Number of formal votes	Number of informal votes	Total number of votes
Chan Ward	10,540	6,860	429	7,289
Lyons Ward	11,198	6,859	540	7,399
Richardson Ward	10,890	7,542	431	7,973
Waters Ward	9,955	6,448	476	6,924
Lord Mayor	42,583	28,360	1,231	29,591

## ELECTION

### Voting

The voting system for local government elections is Proportional Representation (PR):

- Electors must number all the boxes on their ballot paper sequentially starting with the number one for their first choice.
- First preference votes for each candidate on formal ballot papers are counted, then a quota is calculated.
- The quota is the total number of formal ballot papers plus one, divided by the number of vacancies.
- The candidates with votes equal to or greater than the quota are elected. If all vacancies are filled, the election is complete.
- If not, preferences are distributed to the other candidates until all vacancies have been filled.

To learn more about the PR system, go to the [vote counting](#) page on the NTEC website.

### Vote counting – election night

Vote counting began immediately after the close of voting at 6:00 pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2017. A count of first preference votes for Lord Mayor and each ward was undertaken at each voting centre. First preference votes cast at early voting centres and remote voting teams were counted at the Darwin NTEC scrutiny centre in Darwin City.

### Post-election night scrutines

Post-election, all votes received for the City of Darwin were entered into an electronic count system (Easy count) and then re-entered for verification purposes.

Easy count was used for the election as there were multiple vacancies in each ward and a large numbers of candidates for the Lord Mayor vacancy. By using this system it alleviates the need to recheck ballot papers from voting centres as each paper is entered and verified by two different data operators. Counts of absent and postal votes were undertaken in the week following election day. A final count of postal votes was conducted after 12:00 noon on Friday 1 September 2017 and then entered into Easy count.

Voters that applied for a postal vote were expected to complete their ballot papers by 6:00 pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2017. Postal ballot papers then had to be received by the NTEC by 12:00 noon, Friday 1 September to be considered for the count.

Determination of the quota and the distribution of preferences took place after the cut-off for the return of postal vote ballot papers. Election results were made available on the results pages of the website late evening on Friday, 1 September 2017.

### Election outcomes for the City of Darwin

There were 15 candidates contesting the Lord Mayor vacancy and 36 candidates contesting 12 aldermen vacancies across four council wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

### Election of Lord Mayor – City of Darwin

At the close of nominations there were 15 candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Laurel Newton-Thompson	865
Simon Niblock	2,497
Braedon Earley	1,050
Jack Childers Henderson	156
Tilak Raj	568
Paul Masten	131
Greg Strettles	101
Kon Vatskalis	7,608
Katrina Fong Lim	9,014
Paul Eustance	189
Gary Haslett	1,652
Mick Palmer	4,651
Sue Fraser-Adams	585
Nim Jayawardhana	672
Jon Davis	463
TOTAL	30,202

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 15,102.

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

- Kon Vatskalis received the quota at count number 14.

Kon Vatskalis was duly elected.

### Election of three aldermen – Chan Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Peter Pangquee	1,486
Robin Knox	2,677
Emma Young	1,207
Nathan Land	564
Paul Eustance	261
Michael Tsangaris	333
Ryan Neve	623
TOTAL	7,151

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 1,788.

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

- Robin Knox received the quota at count number 1
- Peter Pangquee received the quota at count 2
- Emma Young received the quota at count number 13

Robin Knox, Peter Pangquee and Emma Young were duly elected.

Election of three aldermen – Lyons Ward

At the close of nominations there were 16 candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Paul Masten	341
Sherry Cullen	1,535
Laurel Newton-Thompson	101
Simon Niblock	1,013
Des Fong	622
Dean Dempsey	100
Carol Phayer	470
Mick Palmer	1,950
Jon Davis	157
Sue Fraser-Adams	331
Emily Ford	449
Jack Childers Henderson	47
Vicki McLeod	288
Hayley Barich	277
Braedon Earley	307
Greg Strettles	104
TOTAL	8,092

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 2,024.

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

- Mick Palmer received the quota at count number 11
- Sherry Cullen received the quota at count 50
- Simon Niblock received the quota at count number 156

Mick Palmer, Sherry Cullen and Simon Niblock were duly elected.

Election of three aldermen – Richardson Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Sam Wilks	989
Rebecca Want De Rowe	2,376
Lia Gill	340
Ian Hollingsworth	529
Wayne Keeping	213
Edwin Joseph	765
Jimmy Bouhoris	2,538
George Lambrinidis	1,237
TOTAL	8,987

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 2,247

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

- Jimmy Bouhoris received the quota at count number 1
- Rebecca Want De Rowe received the quota at count number 1
- George Lambrinidis received the quota at count 36

Jimmy Bouhoris, Rebecca Want De Rowe and George Lambrinidis were duly elected.

Election of three aldermen – Waters Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Justine Glover	3,162
Andrew John Arthur	753
Gary Haslett	1,518
Tilak Raj	459
Robin Lawrence	755
TOTAL	6,647

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 1,662.

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

- Justine Glover received the quota at count number 1
- Gary Haslett received the quota at count number 2
- Andrew John Arthur received the quota at count number 4

Justine Glover, Gary Haslett and Andrew John Arthur were duly elected.

### Declaration of the election results

The declaration of election results took place at the NTEC Darwin office at 10:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

### Declared election results for City of Darwin

Lord Mayor (1 vacancy)	Chan Ward (3 vacancies)	Lyons Ward (3 vacancies)	Richardson Ward (3 vacancies)	Waters Ward (3 vacancies)
Kon Vatskalis	Robyn Knox Peter Pangquee Emma Young	Mick Palmer Sherry Cullen Simon Niblock	Jimmy Bouhoris Rebecca Want De Rowe George Lambrinidis	Justine Glover Gary Haslett Andrew John Arthur

A copy of the full distribution of preferences is available on the 2017 NT Council elections [results page](#) of the website.

### Election costs

The SLA estimated the cost of the election for the City of Darwin to be \$445,915. Following the election there was no variation to the estimated costs.

### Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$ 74,917
Staffing	\$178,108
Premises	\$ 29,040
Operational costs	\$123,310
10% GST	\$ 40,537
TOTAL	\$445,915

## ISSUES OF NOTE

### Informality

- In the post-election phase, once the 21 day period for objections had expired, the NTEC conducted a survey of informal ballot papers. A total of 5,784 informal votes were received. During the informality survey it was identified that 57 per cent of the informal votes (3,324) were considered intentionally informal. The remaining 43 per cent (2,457) were considered unintentionally informal. Of the informal ballot papers 1,373 contained duplicate numbers and 740 were incomplete.
- The high number of unintentional informal ballot papers could be attributed to the large number of candidates for Lord Mayor (15) and Lyons Ward (16).

### Election day voting centres

- This election saw a reduction in the number of election day voting centres by three, compared to the 2012 General elections. This was possible with the introduction of the electronic mark-off system and an increased number of electors choosing to vote by post or at an early voting centre. This provided a cost saving of approximately \$15,000 to the council in premises hire and staffing costs. The public awareness campaign included promotion of election day voting centres.
- It was observed on election day that the time taken for some electors to complete their vote was a lot longer than average. This has been attributed to voters taking longer to complete their ballot paper due to the high number of candidates on two of the ballot papers. As a result there were queues for the voting screens. Once this became apparent, voting area managers provided additional voting screens in the centres. Despite the provision of additional voting screens, the Nightcliff and Tiwi voting centres still experienced queuing.
- Thresholds will be built into inventories to allow amendments to materials for future election day voting centres when there are a high number of candidates, as well as additional staff to manage queues.
- Thresholds will be established to allow the NTEC to reassess the size of the ballot paper depending of the number of candidates. For this election a larger sized ballot paper was created for the Lord Mayor and Lyons Ward elections.

### Early voting centres – campaigning

- Campaigning at early voting centres was permitted in two forms depending on what property owners allowed at each location; either campaigning in person or campaign material provided for display and use by voters (i.e. no campaign worker/s present).

It became evident that early voting centres allowing campaign workers had issues arise during the eleven day period of voting. Police were called on various occasions to address campaign workers' concerns. Feedback received from some candidates and their campaigners was that they would prefer all early voting centres provide campaign material only (i.e. no campaign worker/s present). A number of candidates stated that it was difficult to source volunteers for all eleven days of the early voting period.

- The LG legislation currently allows campaign workers to canvass outside the 10 metre boundary at early voting centres and there is no legislative base to prohibit canvassing. The current practice is to prohibit canvassing only at the direction of the landlord at early voting centres.

- During SLA negotiations, the City of Darwin requested an additional early voting centre at the council office to issue votes for the City of Darwin only (i.e. no absent votes). The NTEC experienced issues gaining access to the assigned room (theatrette) as it had been allocated to the library for a workshop on the day NTEC staff were to set up. There were no access keys prepared for NTEC staff which caused delays and instructions for use of the after-hours air-conditioning were not provided. This resulted in no air-conditioning on Saturday 19 August when the EVC opened at 9:00 am until the afternoon of that day.
- Delays were experienced in obtaining disabled access parking facilities in front of the Darwin EVC located in Mitchell Street. The centre was open for four days before signage was provided by council. An agreed action that council provides disabled access in a timely manner for future elections will be included in the SLA.
- It is recommended that future NT Council elections only have two early voting centres that cater for voters in the City of Darwin; one in Darwin City and one in Casuarina.

#### Complaints

- Two formal complaints were received for the election pertaining to the City of Darwin.
  1. A Mayoral candidate alleged that Facebook posts by a third party (not a candidate), were in breach of Section 99(2) of the *NT Local Government Act*.

It was determined that there was no breach of Section 99(2); however, if the complainant was of the view that the Facebook posts were defamatory, the proper course of action would be to take appropriate civil action.

In their response the third party lodged seven formal complaints that were dismissed.
  2. A mayoral candidate alleged that the NT News lift out 'Who will win' was in breach of section 97 of the *NT Local Government Act*.

The Commissioner's determination of the allegation was that there was no breach of section 97. The complainant was advised that Section 97 is designed so that a person must not obstruct, or interfere with, the proper conduct of an election or poll. The complainant was advised that if he still had concerns over the publication that he should either contact the NT News directly or lodge a complaint with the Advertising Standards Bureau.

#### Non-voters

- Approximately 14,100 (28 per cent) electors were identified as failing to vote in the 2017 NT Council elections for the City of Darwin. A further 1,678 electors (3 per cent) provided valid and sufficient reasons as to why they were unable to vote.
- The approximate percentage of non-voters for each ward was: Chan Ward 24 per cent; Lyons Ward 32 per cent; Richardson Ward 23 per cent and Waters Ward 21 per cent.
- **The Northern Territory Electoral Commission's role is to extend our service to** undertake non-voting follow-up action upon instruction from Council.
- In 2015, the City of Darwin engaged the NTEC to pursue electors who did not vote in the Lyons Ward by-election. The non-voter fee in Local Government elections is \$50.00.
- The costs associated with the NTEC undertaking 14,100 potential non-voters for the 2017 NT Council elections would be approximately \$40,490.00 (GST inclusive). Based on the experience of pursuing non-votes in the 2015 Lyons Ward by-election, these costs would be recovered through the payment of fines.

We would like to extend our thanks for the support received from Brendon, Mark, Melissa and their staff for their assistance.