

Political parties

Financial disclosure factsheet – Legislative Assembly

Disclaimer: This factsheet is a general overview provided by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) and should not substitute legal advice. Unless specified otherwise, all references are to the Electoral Act 2004 (NT), effective from 1 July 2021. Please consult the legislation and seek independent legal advice as necessary.

Why are there financial disclosure requirements?

Financial disclosure requirements are designed to:¹

- establish a transparent electoral expenditure and disclosure regime
- increase the transparency of election campaigns
- reduce undue influence in the electoral process
- promote the accountability of, and compliance by, registered parties, elected members, candidates, associated entities, third party campaigners, and donors.

Definition of a political party

A political party is an organisation (whether incorporated or unincorporated) whose objective or primary activity is promoting the election to the Legislative Assembly of a candidate or candidates endorsed by it.²

Parties must register to operate in the Northern Territory by submitting the required form, documents, and payment to the NTEC at least 6 months³ before a general election. Forms are on the NTEC website.

The party's registered officer must appoint a reporting agent for financial disclosure. If no appointment is in force for a registered party, the registered officer of the party is taken to be the reporting agent.⁴

Territory Campaign Account (TCA)

Parties must keep a separate bank account with an Authorised Deposit-taking Institution (ADI) for electoral purposes.⁵ All election expenditure must be paid from the TCA, and any gifts intended for electoral purposes must be transferred into the TCA as soon as practicable.⁶ See Factsheet 8.

Financial disclosure returns

Parties must submit (for due dates see calendar below):⁷

- electoral and annual gift returns
- electoral expenditure and annual (expenditure) returns.

Nil returns must be submitted if no gifts were received or expenditure incurred during the relevant period.

¹ See section 175S

² See section 3

³ See section 156(2)

⁴ See sections 184 - 185

⁵ See section 213A. For the list of ADIs, see <https://www.apra.gov.au/register-of-authorised-deposit-taking-institutions>

⁶ See sections 213B – 213D

⁷ See sections 191, 192, 200, 205, 205A



Approved forms are on the NTEC website. See factsheets 13 and 14 for further information on returns.

Refer to Returns Schedule for this election event.

Gifts (donations)

A gift is when a person or entity gives money, services, expertise, or something else belonging to them to another without expecting equal value in return. Gifts include monetary transactions and non-monetary transactions, known as gifts in kind. It's important to note that the terms 'gift' and 'donation' are used interchangeably and carry the same meaning within this context. Returns must disclose all gifts (including non-monetary gifts) received during the relevant reporting period.

- Factsheet 9 defines gifts, volunteer labour, the gift aggregation period, and record-keeping requirements.
- The *Gifts and Electoral Expenditure Guidelines* provide further guidance.
- Factsheet 10 outlines the federal purposes gift exemption.
- Parties must inform donors who provide over \$1,500 in writing about their requirement to submit a donor return by a specific date. Factsheet 7 outlines donor requirements.

Loans

Parties can enter into loans with an Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions (ADI).⁸ Parties must only receive a loan of \$1,500 or more from a person or entity (other than an ADI) if certain details are recorded. Factsheet 11 outlines requirements for loans.

Electoral expenditure

The cap on electoral expenditure applies during the **capped expenditure period**. This period commences from 1 January of the year in which the election is held and ends 30 days after election day (for general elections) OR commences from and including the day of the issue of the writ and ends 30 days after election day (by-elections).

Independent candidates must submit an electoral expenditure return. The cap is 40,000 monetary units per division.

Endorsed candidates must provide electoral expenditure details to their party's reporting agent, who submits an electoral expenditure return and an annual (expenditure) return. The electoral expenditure cap for parties is multiplied by the number of divisions where the party endorses a candidate.

Note: the value of a monetary unit is calculated in line with changes to Darwin's Consumer Price Index and is updated every financial year.

Record-keeping requirements

Financial records relating to elections must be retained for four years starting on election day, and records relating to annual returns must be retained for 4 years starting the day after the last day when the return must be given to the NTEC.⁹ For further details see factsheet 15.

⁸ For the list of ADIs, see <https://www.apra.gov.au/register-of-authorized-deposit-taking-institutions>

⁹ See section 220

Offences and penalties

The NTEC applies a constructive compliance approach to its regulatory activities, providing electoral participants with resources and information to support compliance with their obligations. Where education does not address non-compliance or where the NTEC believes an offence has been committed, the NTEC can undertake a range of actions to ensure and enforce compliance. For further details see factsheet 16.

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
2.1	12 February 2026	Adam Wilson, Financial Disclosure and Compliance Manager	Updated for 2026 Nightcliff By-election