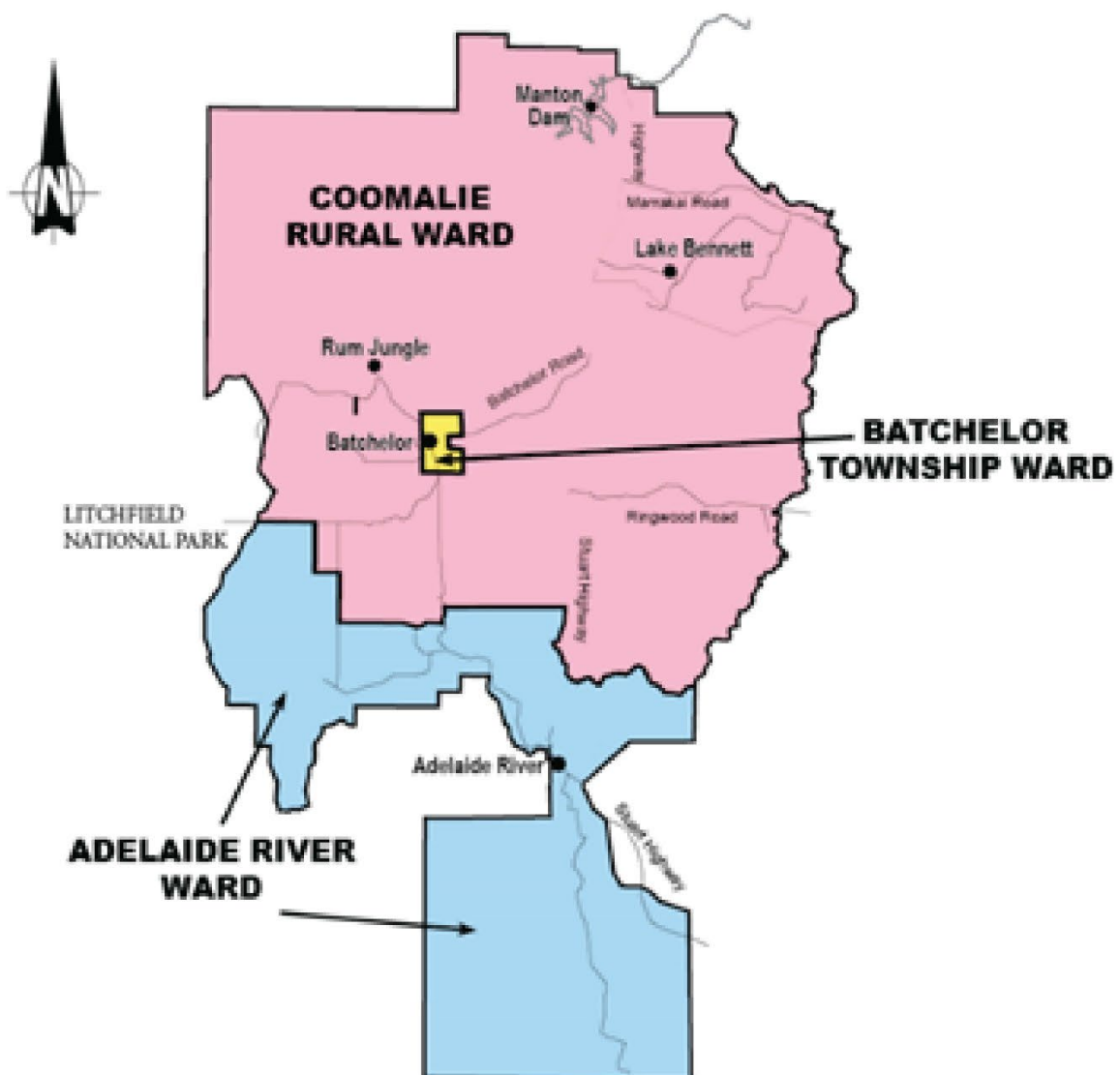


Coomalie Community Government Council

Election Report



NOTE: Electors enrolled for addresses to the west and east of the council boundaries are NOT required to vote as this area is unincorporated. For further information contact the NTEC.

NTEC version control

2021 Local Government Elections - Coomalie Community Government Council Report

| Version Number | Purpose/change | Author | Date |
|----------------|--|------------------|------------|
| 1.0 | Final version approved by K. Kelly | K. Kelly NTEC | 01/02/2022 |
| 1.1 | Addition of version control Removal of blank page | M. O'Brien | 12/04/2022 |
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The latest version is accessible via the NTEC website at ntec.nt.gov.au.



Election timetable

2021 Local Government Elections

28 August 2021

| Date | Time | |
|----------------------|------------|---|
| Friday 16 July | | Nominations open |
| Tuesday 27 July | 5:00 pm | Electoral roll closes |
| Thursday 5 August | 12:00 noon | Nominations close |
| Friday 6 August | 12:00 noon | Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers |
| Monday 9 August | | Postal vote mail-out commences |
| Monday 16 August | 8:00 am | Early voting commences Mobile voting commences |
| Tuesday 24 August | 6:00 pm | Overseas postal voting despatches cease |
| Thursday 26 August | 6:00 pm | All postal voting despatches cease |
| Friday 27 August | 6:00 pm | Early voting ceases |
| Saturday 28 August | 6:00 pm | Primary counts of postal, mobile and early votes commence 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 |
| Monday 30 August | 9:00 am | Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts |
| Thursday 2 September | 9:00 am | Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts |
| Friday 10 September | 12:00 noon | Deadline for receipt of postal votes Final counts of postal votes commence |
| | 6:00 pm | Distribution of preferences |
| Monday 13 September | 10:00 am | Declaration of the election result |

INDEX

| | |
|--|----|
| BACKGROUND | 1 |
| Elections | 1 |
| Legislation..... | 1 |
| Service Charter..... | 1 |
| Service Level Agreement..... | 1 |
| BOUNDARY CHANGES | 2 |
| ENROLMENT | 2 |
| PUBLIC AWARENESS | 2 |
| Campaign overview | 2 |
| Newsletters | 3 |
| Advertising – radio, television, social media..... | 3 |
| Direct digital and print advertising | 3 |
| Call centre..... | 5 |
| Candidate information sessions..... | 5 |
| Email and SMS | 5 |
| Other promotional activities..... | 5 |
| VOTING SERVICES | 6 |
| Nominations | 6 |
| Electronic mark-off | 6 |
| ELECTION | 6 |
| Early voting..... | 7 |
| Remote mobile voting | 7 |
| Mobile voting – urban institutions | 7 |
| Postal voting | 7 |
| Declaration voting..... | 8 |
| Election day voting centres – absent voting..... | 8 |
| Participation | 9 |
| Non-voters | 9 |
| Informality | 9 |
| Voting system | 10 |
| Vote counting – election night | 10 |
| Post-election night scrutinies | 10 |
| ELECTION OUTCOMES | 10 |
| Election of 2 councillors – Adelaide River Ward..... | 10 |
| Election of 2 councillors – Batchelor Township Ward..... | 10 |
| Election of 2 councillors – Coomalie Rural Ward..... | 11 |
| Declaration of the election results..... | 11 |
| ELECTION COSTS | 12 |
| POST-ELECTION DEBRIEF | 12 |

For more information go to www.ntec.nt.gov.au

BACKGROUND

Elections

Election day for the 2021 Local Government Elections was Saturday 28 August. Local government general elections in the Northern Territory cover 17 local government areas and include 60 separate elections for 159 positions. For Coomalie Community Government Council, there were 3 elections to be contested for its 3 wards:

- Adelaide River Ward – 2 councillors
- Batchelor Township Ward – 2 councillors
- Coomlie Rural Ward – 2 councillors

Legislation

This was the first general election under the new *Local Government Act 2019* (which commenced 1 July 2021), with further electoral legislative and regulations changes included in amendments passed in May and June 2021.

The key changes relating to local government elections resulting from these amendments are:

- Changes to declaration voting that allows electors who turn up at a voting centre, but are not enrolled (or are enrolled for an interstate address) to still cast a vote that can be admitted to the count. The declaration envelope acts as an enrolment form which is forwarded to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) for processing. If the person is able to be enrolled, their vote is added to the count. Previously, declaration votes would result in updated enrolments, but their ballot papers would not be included in the count.
- Financial disclosure requirements were simplified so that only candidates who receive reportable donations and loans are required to complete a return, and disclosure timeframes were generally aligned to those in the *Electoral Act 2004*. (The financial disclosure requirements do not come into effect until 1 July 2022, so were not relevant to the 2021 Local Government Elections.)
- Other amendments included changes to the election timetable and nomination requirements.

Service Charter

The service charter (one document for all councils) provided an overview of service commitments and associated standards that councils could expect from the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC). The charter also described how councils could assist in the delivery of the elections and thereby offset some of their costs. These are detailed in individual service level agreements that the NTEC had with each council.

Service Level Agreement

As part of its service level agreement signed 6 July 2021, Coomalie Community Government Council opted to provide or facilitate the following for its elections:

- a candidate information session in partnership with the Local Government Association of the NT (LGANT)
- promotion of the election via its social media outlets
- providing banner space on council signage at no cost
- receiving and forwarding nominations to the NTEC.

All electoral services were provided by the NT Electoral Commission.

BOUNDARY CHANGES

There were no boundary or representative structure changes as a result of the representation review of Coomalie Community Government Council conducted prior to the election.

ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 27 July at 5:00pm there was a total of 631 electors enrolled in the Coomalie Community Government Council. This was a 2.8% increase in enrolment from the previous local government general elections in 2017. The enrolment numbers per ward were as follows:

- Adelaide River Ward – 216 (up from 196 in 2017)
- Batchelor Township Ward – 172 (up from 168 in 2017)
- Coomalie Rural Ward – 243 (down from 250 in 2017).

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Campaign overview

The public awareness campaign for the 2021 Local Government Elections was implemented in two broad phases. The first phase focused on awareness and enrolment. The second was a call to action for all eligible Territorians to vote.

The roll out of the public awareness campaign for the 2021 Local Government Elections commenced on 21 June and continued through until the declaration of the results on 13 September 2021. Social media was the primary channel used to promote the election Territory wide. Television, radio, digital and print media were also integral parts of the media mix.

In-language radio, TV and social media content was also created to promote the election throughout remote areas and communities in the Territory. Based on recommendations from the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and Aboriginal Broadcasting Australia, content was developed in 9 Aboriginal languages which were geo-targeted to the regions where the languages are spoken.

Broadly understood Aboriginal languages such as Kriol and Arrernte were used right across the northern and southern parts to the Territory respectively to ensure that content developed in at least one relevant language other than English was available Territory wide.

Website

The website for the 2021 Local Government Elections was launched early June and provided comprehensive information for candidates and electors. The site was designed to be the primary source of information for voters about enrolment and voting options, times and locations and results.

For candidates, the site provided information about nominating, campaigning, voting and scrutineering processes.

The following table shows website engagement for the election period (21 June through to 13 September) as well as specific Coomalie Community Government Council results and information page engagement, prior to and post election day.

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Total website page views | 865,814 |
| Coomalie results page views (all wards) | 2,779 |
| Coomalie list of councillor candidates | 444 |
| All other Coomalie content related pages | 2,890 |
| Total Coomalie content related page views | 6,113 |

Newsletters



A total of 10 election specific newsletters were emailed to stakeholders including councils and candidates, from 28 May through to 9 September. The newsletters kept stakeholders up to date with topics ranging from nomination information through to details of vote counting. The newsletters were also available on the NTEC website and links were shared on the NTEC's Facebook page.

Advertising – radio, television, social media

NTEC branded advertisements of 15 seconds were developed for radio, television and social media. The advertisements carried simple, concise messages such as: 'check your enrolment', 'are you correctly enrolled?', 'early voting has started', and 'vote now'.

All advertisements promoted the NTEC website as the prime source of information for electors to 'find out more'.

These advertisements were also translated into 9 Aboriginal languages and broadcast on the CAAMA, Aboriginal Broadcasting Australia, Yolngu Radio and TEABBA radio networks throughout the Territory.

In-language versions were also broadcast on Aboriginal Broadcasting Australia TV and ICTV channels and were geo-targeted to their respective language areas on social media.

The stock advertisements were run on social media in conjunction with a series of video logs (vlogs) featuring well-known Territorians such as Charlie King, who promoted key election messages on behalf of the NTEC.

A number of social media advertisements were developed in collaboration with Bellette Media featuring Territorians raising awareness about the elections.

Facebook engagement statistics show that the video log (vlog) format advertisements proved highly successful. In total, 8 of the 42 social media advertisements were produced in either a vlog or less formal format. Those 8 advertisements accounted for 152,988 video views from the campaign total of 377,810 views.

English language radio advertisements were broadcast on Hot 100 and Mix-FM stations in the Top End and Sun FM and 8HA in Central Australia.

English language television ads were broadcast on Channel 7, Channel 9 and Imparja networks. Placement of the ads was focused on 'event' TV, or high-rating programs and popular sports such as AFL and NRL matches.

Direct digital and print advertising

With a large decline in print media options since the 2017 general elections, newspaper advertising for the 2021 Local Government Elections was largely restricted to statutory advertising requirements as prescribed under the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021. These advertisements ran in the NT News as the Territory's primary, widely-circulated newspaper.

However, further publications with a digital presence such as Alice Springs News Online, Tennant Creek and District Times and Katherine Times were also engaged for location targeted aspects of the campaign.

Direct digital advertising placements on millennial, tech-savvy platforms such as EA Games and NewsXtend, proved highly successful in terms of campaign awareness.

From 92,893 video impressions served on EA Games, a view through rate of 89.9 per cent was achieved, or put another way, there were 83,486 complete through plays of the two, 15 second advertisements run across the campaign.

The NewsXtend platform also served 298,501 impressions Territory-wide and achieved 30,805 fully played video views of awareness advertisements.

The following tables outline relevant statistics for different advertising channels and platforms.

Television

| Network | Dates aired | Number of advertisements |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Channel 7 Darwin | 04/07/2021 – 28/08/2021 | 202 |
| Channel 7 Central | | 228 |
| Channel 9 | | 78 |
| Imparja | | 127 |
| ICTV | | 120 |
| ABA | | 124 |
| Bold: Channels aired throughout Coomalie council region | | Total |

Radio

| Network | Dates aired | Number of advertisements |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Hot 100 | 04/07/2021 – 28/08/2021 | 158 |
| Mix FM | | 157 |
| CAAMA | | 168 |
| TEABBA | | 109 |
| ABA | | 141 |
| Yolngu Radio | | 104 |
| Sun FM | | 104 |
| 8HA | | 104 |
| Bold: Channels aired throughout Coomalie council region | | Total |

Social Media

| Campaign | Reach | Impressions | Click through rate |
|--|---------|-------------|--------------------|
| 2021 Local Government Elections – overall | 168,472 | 2,825,293 | 1.07%* |
| Coomalie geo-targeted ads# | 12,675 | 30,326 | 3.12% |

*Industry standard 0.89%

#Includes only ads geo-targeted to run in the Coomalie council and surrounding area (Litchfield). Does not include Territory wide ads which also ran in the Coomalie council area.

Call centre

A call centre was established on Monday 2 August and ran until 6pm on 28 August, election day. Staff assisted electors with a variety of enquiries related to the election during this period.

| Enquiry type | Enquiry numbers |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Total phone calls | 1,522 |
| Emails to ntec@nt.gov.au | 261 |
| Front counter | 88 |
| Formal complaints | 43 |

Candidate information sessions

A candidate information session was organised by the Local Government Association of the NT in partnership with the council, which the NTEC presented at. The table below provides details about this session.

| Date | Location | Number of attendees |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 7 July 2021 | Coomalie Community Government Council | 10 |

Email and SMS

Electors who have provided either their mobile phone number or email address or both are able to be contacted directly by the NTEC. Those electors in the Coomalie council area received 4 messages before election day, 28 August. Details of those messages were:

| Message | Email | Date sent | SMS | Date sent |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Enrolment | 223 | 19-07-2021 | 306 | 22-07-2021 |
| Voting suspended (COVID-19) | 16* | 16-08-2021 | 265 | 16-08-2021 |
| Vote now, early voting (post lockdown) | 186 | 19-08-2021 | | |
| Community specific message sent 2 days before remote team visit | | | 188 | 25-08-2021 |
| Last day/s to vote# | 46 | 26-08-2021 | 129 | 28-08-2021 |
| Totals | 471 | | 888 | |

*Sent only if no SMS contact

#Sent only to electors who had not yet voted

Other promotional activities

The NTEC hosted stalls on the show circuit promoting the upcoming 2021 Local Government Elections in Katherine and Darwin only. Stalls were ready to be run in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek but these shows were cancelled due to a COVID-19 lockdown.

The NTEC also attended the annual Welcome to the Top End Expo for Defence families and held a stall at the NAIDOC week celebrations in Darwin.

VOTING SERVICES

Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 16 July and closed on Thursday 5 August at 12:00 noon. For Coomalie Community Government Council there were a total of 12 accepted nominations for 6 council vacancies. No nominations were rejected or withdrawn.

The declaration of nominations was held in on Level 1 of the NTEC office building at 80 Mitchell Street, Darwin. The event was attended by candidates, the general public, council representatives and media. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate and results were uploaded onto the NTEC website and Facebook page as soon as the draw was completed.

Coomalie Community Government Council – summary of accepted nominations

| Ward | Nominations |
|--|-------------------|
| Adelaide River Ward (2 vacancies) | Sharon L BESWICK |
| | Steve Bones NOBLE |

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Batchelor Township Ward (2 vacancies) | Bill BALDWIN |
| | Angus MCCLYMONT |
| | Deborah MOYLE |

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Coomalie Rural Ward (2 vacancies) | Anthony BROWN |
| | Greg STRETTLES |
| | Mary ASHLEY |
| | Jeremy PRESTON |
| | Colin FREEMAN |
| | Daryl William CARTLEDGE |
| | Sue BULMER |

Electronic mark-off

An electronic voter mark-off system is now used in all voting centres across the Northern Territory. The system records when someone has voted anywhere in the NT in real time. Where there is no internet coverage, each netbook stores the voter mark off information until such time as there is internet coverage which allows the netbooks to synchronise and send the information to NTEC offices.

Voting centres are issued paper copies of the certified lists as an emergency backup option in case of complete failure of the electronic mark off system.

The system also prevents multiple voting, as a voter who is marked off electronically in one voting centre or who has completed a postal vote will appear in all voting centres as already voted.

ELECTION

At the close of nominations the number of candidates did not exceed the number of vacancies in the Adelaide River Ward. Therefore, an election was not required to be held in this ward.

Early voting

Early voting services were offered for two weeks (from Monday 16 August to Friday 27 August) at 8 early voting centres across the Territory. However, from 12 noon, Monday 16 August to 12 noon, Thursday 19 August, early voting was suspended Territory wide due to a COVID lockdown. To offset the loss of service to electors, early voting times were extended. The table below shows early voting centres (EVCs) that issued votes to Coomalie Community Government Council electors.

Early voting statistics – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Location | Votes issued |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Casuarina EVC | 2 |
| Coolalinga EVC | 57 |
| Darwin EVC | 1 |
| Tennant Creek EVC | 1 |
| Yarrowonga EVC | 10 |
| Total | 71 |

Remote mobile voting

A remote mobile voting service was provided in Batchelor on Saturday 28 August, from 8:45am to 2:45pm. This voting centre issued 132 votes to Coomalie Community Government Council electors (including declaration votes).

Mobile voting – urban institutions

Mobile voting teams visited Darwin public and private hospitals, and the Darwin Correctional Centre to provide patients and inmates with an opportunity to vote. These teams issued 1 vote to a Coomalie Community Government Council elector.

Postal voting

All electors have the option to postal vote. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, postal voting services were provided to all residents of urban aged care facilities (rather than in-house mobile voting as provided previously) throughout the Territory. As Australia Post could not guarantee the delivery and return of postal votes to overseas addresses within the legislated timeframes, due to the impact of COVID-19 on international flights, no postal votes were sent overseas. The table below provides further details about postal votes for Central Desert Regional Council residents.

Postal voting statistics – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Description | Number |
|---|--------|
| Number of postal vote applications received | 106 |
| Number of postal votes issued | 60 |
| Number of postal vote applications rejected | 46 |
| Number of postal votes returned | 58 |
| Number of postal votes added to the count | 47 |
| Number of postal votes rejected | 11 |

The reasons for rejecting postal vote applications were:

- ward did not go to election (40)
- multiple applications received from the same elector (6)

The reasons for rejecting returned postal votes were:

- ordinary vote issued (i.e. elector marked off as having voted in person) (7)
- vote dated too late (2)
- vote not signed (2)

Declaration voting

A person who cannot be found on the electoral roll, but is entitled to vote, can be issued with a declaration vote after completing and signing a declaration envelope. Their ballot paper is placed in the envelope and a scrutiny of all declaration envelopes commences the day after election day.

Legislative amendments passed in May 2021 created a savings provision that allows eligible electors who are unenrolled at the close of roll date, a chance for their vote to be admitted to the count. During the declaration scrutiny process, all declaration envelopes are forwarded to the AEC and eligible electors are added to the roll using the envelope as an enrolment form. Where voters are unable to be enrolled, their declaration vote is rejected.

For Coomalie Community Government Council the table below shows the declaration votes admitted to the count and those rejected.

Declaration voting statistics – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Accepted | Rejected | Total |
|----------|----------|-------|
| 7 | 2 | 9 |

The reason for rejecting the 2 declaration votes was because the electors were enrolled for a different local government area to the one they completed the ballot paper for. Electors must vote for the area they are enrolled in at the close of electoral roll, even if they have since moved to another NT address.

Election day voting centres – absent voting

Election day was Saturday 28 August 2021. While some election day voting centres were only able to issues votes to electors in the local government area they were located in, any electors could vote at Casuarina, Darwin City, Palmerston, Yarrowonga, Coolalinga Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs voting centres on election day. Ballot papers issued outside an elector's local government area on election day at one of these voting centres was considered an absent vote.

Absent voting statistics – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Location | Votes issued |
|--------------|--------------|
| Casuarina | 2 |
| Coolalinga | 11 |
| Total | 13 |

Participation

Turnout for the Coomalie Community Government Council election was 63.6% with Batchelor Township Ward on 60.5% (104 electors out of 172) and Coomalie Rural Ward on 65.8% (160 electors out of 243).

The turnout rate was up from the previous elections in 2017 where the council had a turnout rate of 57.0% (when again only two wards had elections go ahead, but different wards to 2021). At these elections Adelaide River Ward had a turnout rate of 64.8% (127 electors out of 196 enrolled) and Coomalie Rural Ward had 50.8% (127 electors out of 250 enrolled).

Number of votes counted by voting centre type – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Voting centre | Number of votes counted | % of total votes |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Remote and urban mobile teams | 126 | 47.7% |
| Early (other regions) | 71 | 26.9% |
| Postal | 47 | 17.8% |
| Absent | 13 | 4.9% |
| Declaration | 7 | 2.7% |
| Total | 264 | 100% |

Non-voters

There were 151 identified non-voters across the council area. The table below shows the age and gender demographics of these non-voters.

Non-voter statistics – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Gender | 18-29 years | 30-49 years | 50-69 years | 70+ years | Total |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Female | 7 | 15 | 33 | 12 | 67 |
| Male | 6 | 24 | 36 | 18 | 84 |
| Total | 13 | 39 | 69 | 30 | 151 |

Informality

Of the 264 ballot papers counted, 7 were considered informal and so not counted. This is an informality rate of 2.7%.

Informal vote statistics

| Ballot paper | Intentional | Unintentional | Total |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------|
| Batchelor Township Ward | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Coomalie Rural Ward | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Total | 4 | 3 | 7 |

Voting system

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 calculated using the following formula: (total number of formal votes / (number of vacancies + 1)) +1.
- 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. A count of first preference votes for councillors was undertaken at each election day voting centre. First preference votes cast at early and mobile voting centres (including Batchelor) were counted at the Darwin scrutiny centre.

Post-election night scrutinies

- A count of postal votes returned by election day were counted was conducted on the Monday following election day. Counts of declaration votes, and postal votes returned during the counting period were undertaken over the 13 days following election day.
- Votes received for the councillor vacancies were entered into an electronic count system that the NTEC uses to count votes using proportional representation (Easy Count). All votes are then re-entered for verification purposes.
- Using this system alleviates the need to undertake a fresh re-check of ballot papers as each paper is entered and verified by two different data operators.
- Following the deadline for the receipt of postal votes at 12 noon on Friday 10 September, a distribution of preferences for the councillor positions was conducted electronically using the Easy Count software.

ELECTION OUTCOMES

There were 12 candidates contesting 6 councillor vacancies. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in the tables below.

Election of 2 councillors – Adelaide River Ward

At the close of nominations the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and **Sharon L BESWICK** and **Steve Bones NOBLE** were duly declared elected.

Election of 2 councillors – Batchelor Township Ward

At the close of nominations there were 3 candidates for 2 positions. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

| Candidate | First preferences |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Bill BALDWIN | 27 |
| Angus MCCLYMONT | 30 |
| Deborah MOYLE | 45 |
| Total | 102 |

The quota required under the proportional representation voting system was 35. Following the distribution of preferences, and in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (*Electoral*) Regulations, the results were as follows:

- **Deborah MOYLE** received the quota at count number 1
- **Angus MCCLYMONT** received the quota at count number 2

Deborah MOYLE and **Angus MCCLYMONT** were duly elected.

Election of 2 councillors – Coomalie Rural Ward

At the close of nominations there were 7 candidates for 2 positions. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

| Candidate | First preferences |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Anthony BROWN | 12 |
| Greg STRETTLES | 26 |
| Mary ASHLEY | 6 |
| Jeremy PRESTON | 22 |
| Colin FREEMAN | 48 |
| Daryl William CARTLEDGE | 8 |
| Sue BULMER | 33 |
| Total | 155 |

The quota required under the proportional representation voting system was 52. Following the distribution of preferences, and in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations, the results were as follows:

- **Colin FREEMAN** received the quota at count number 3
- **Sue BULMER** received the quota at count number 10

Colin FREEMAN and **Sue BULMER** were duly elected.

Declaration of the election results

The declaration of election results for Coomalie Community Government Council for 6 elected councillors took place at the NTEC office at 80 Mitchell Street Darwin at 2:00pm on Monday 13 September 2021.

A copy of the full distribution of preferences is available on the 2021 Local Government Elections [results page](#) of the website.

Declared election results for Coomalie Community Government Council

| Adelaide River Ward | Batchelor Township Ward | Coomalie Rural Ward |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Sharon L BESWICK | Deborah MOYLE | Colin FREEMAN |
| Steve Bones NOBLE | Angus MCCLYMONT | Sue BULMER |

ELECTION COSTS**Estimate of cost – Coomalie Community Government Council**

| Election area | Estimated cost |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Public awareness | \$1,343 |
| Staffing | \$3,628 |
| Operational | \$4,020 |
| Sub total | \$8,991 |
| 10% GST | \$899 |
| Total estimated cost | \$9,890 |

Actual cost – Coomalie Community Government Council

| Election area | Actual cost |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Public awareness | \$878 |
| Staffing | \$8,014 |
| Operational | \$1,989 |
| Sub total | \$10,881 |
| 10% GST | \$1,088 |
| Total actual cost | \$11,969 |

POST-ELECTION DEBRIEF

A debrief of the election activities and outcomes took place with the Coomalie Community Government Council on 8 November 2021. Overall, the council were satisfied with the level of services provided by the NTEC, and were pleased with the increase in turnout and decrease in informal ballot papers compared to previous elections. Council noted that the increased advertising and communications within the community may have contributed to the increased voter turnout.

The council noted that in future elections it would consider opportunities to involve past and current members of council in the candidate information sessions.