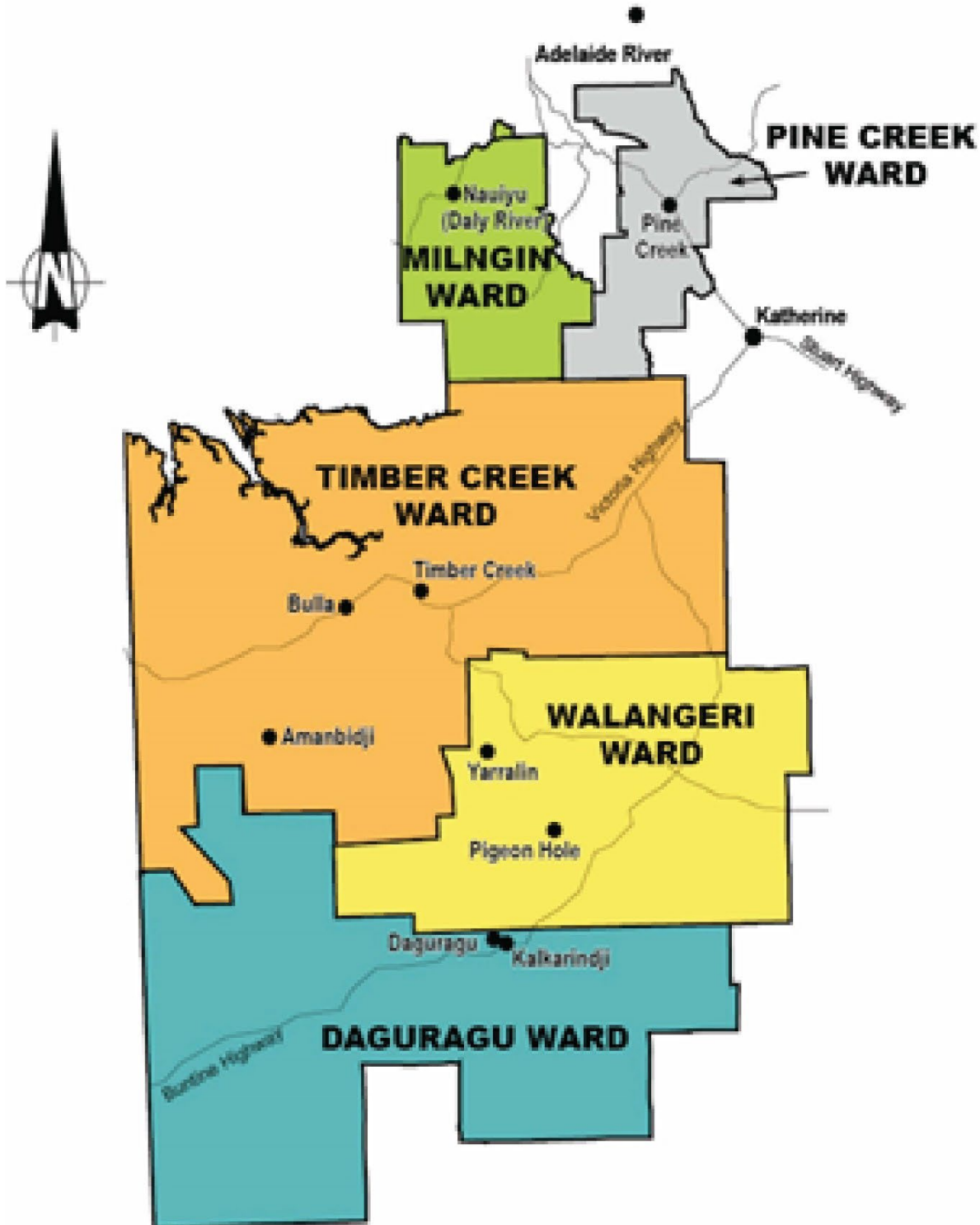


Victoria Daly Regional Council Election Report



Victoria Daly
REGIONAL COUNCIL



NTEC version control

2021 Local Government Elections - Victoria Daly Regional 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	M. O'Brien	12/04/2022

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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

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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 Victoria Daly Regional Council, there were 5 elections to be contested for its 5 wards:

- Daguragu Ward – 1 councillor
- Milngin Ward – 1 councillor
- Pine Creek Ward – 1 councillor
- Timber Creek Ward – 1 councillor
- Walangeri Ward – 1 councillor .

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 July 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

For the first time at a local government election in the Northern Territory, NTEC and councils negotiated to trial a new voting option called council delivery centres (CDCs). These were essentially early voting centres that provided ordinary and declaration voting services and were located in council premises in remote communities. The CDCs were managed and staffed by councils, under the supervision of the NTEC. All regional councils were offered the option of council delivery centres and/or mobile voting services to provide voting services to electors in their remote areas.

As part of its service level agreement signed 27 July 2021, Victoria Daly Regional Council opted to provide or facilitate the following for its elections:

- council owned accommodation (if required) and voting premises at no cost
- Local staff to undertake interpreter assistance in communities during voting hours

- Transport within larger communities at no cost including airstrip pick up and drop offs
- promotion of the election through social media and council sites throughout the council area
- receipt and forwarding of nominations to the NTEC for official processing.

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 Victoria Daly Regional 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 1,712 electors enrolled in the Victoria Daly Regional Council. This was a 0.06% decrease in enrolment from the previous local government general elections in 2017. The enrolment numbers per ward were as follows:

- Daguragu Ward – 434 (up from 421 in 2017)
- Milngin Ward – 361 (down from 368 in 2017)
- Pine Creek Ward – 202 (down from 219 in 2017)
- Timber Creek Ward – 407 (down from 409 in 2017)
- Walangeri Ward – 308 (up from 296 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 Victoria Daly Regional Council results and information page engagement, prior to and post election day.

Total website page views	865,814
Victoria Daly councillor results page views (all wards)	1,703
Victoria Daly list of councillor candidates	1,408
Other Victoria Daly content related page views	734
Total Victoria Daly content related page views	3,845

Newsletters



2021 Local Government Elections: Newsletter 2
Issue date: Friday 18 June

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 vlog format advertisements proved highly successful. In total, 8 of the 42 social media advertisements were produced in either a vlog or light-hearted 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.

In the Victoria Daly Regional Council area, all in-language advertisements were run in Kriol, Warlpiri and Murrinh Patha.

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 Victoria Daly Regional Council area *VAST network		Total 879

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 Victoria Daly council area.		Total 1,045

Social Media

Campaign	Reach	Impressions	Click through rate
2021 Local Government Elections – overall	168,472	2,825,293	1.07%*
Victoria Daly geo-targeted ads#	7,955	38,556	3.0%

*Industry standard 0.89%

#Includes only in-language ads targeted to run in the Victoria Daly council area. Does not include NT wide run ads in English.

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

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 Victoria Daly Regional Council area received 4 messages before election day, 28 August. Details of those messages were:

Message	Email	Date sent	SMS	Date sent
Enrolment	230	19-07-2021	373	22-07-2021
Voting suspended (COVID-19)	20*	16-08-2021	324	16-08-2021
Vote now, early voting (post lockdown)	181	19-08-2021		
Community specific message sent 2 days before remote team visit			110	21-24-08-2021
Totals	431		807	

*Sent only if no SMS contact

#Sent only to electors who had not 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. There were a total of 8 accepted nominations for 5 council vacancies. No nominations were rejected or withdrawn.

The declaration of nominations was held in on Level 2 of the NTEC office building at 80 Mitchell Street. 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.

Victoria Daly Regional Council – summary of accepted nominations/candidates

Ward	Nominations
Daguragu Ward (1 vacancy)	Georgina MACLEOD
Milngin Ward (1 vacancy)	Andy MCTAGGART
Pine Creek Ward (1 vacancy)	Alain DENOUEL
	Lizzie SULLIVAN
	Yvette WILLIAMS
Timber Creek Ward (1 vacancy)	Reg KING
	Shirley Anne GARLETT
Walangeri (1 vacancy)	Brian PEDWELL

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 Daguragu, Milngin and Walangeri wards. Therefore, elections were not required to be held in these wards and only 2 elections were held for Victoria Daly Regional Council.

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 Victoria Daly Regional Council electors.

Early voting statistics – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Location	Votes issued
Casuarina EVC	6
Coolalinga EVC	1
Darwin EVC	1
Katherine EVC	14
Palmerston EVC	1
Yarrowonga EVC	1
Total	24

Remote mobile voting

A remote mobile voting team visited 8 communities in the Victoria Daly Regional Council area from Monday 23 August to Friday 27 August. This team issued 140 votes to Victoria Daly Regional Council electors (including declaration votes).

Remote mobile voting statistics – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Location	Votes issued
Amanbidji	16
Bulla	5
Gilwi	15
Kybrook Farm	10
Menngen	12
Myatt	10
Pine Creek	56
Timber Creek	16
Total	140

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 Victoria Daly Regional 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 – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Description	Number
Number of postal vote applications received	105
Number of postal votes issued	68
Number of postal vote applications rejected	37
Number of postal votes returned	55
Number of postal votes added to the count	38
Number of postal votes rejected	17

The reasons for rejecting postal vote applications were:

- ward did not go to election (29)
- multiple applications received from the same elector (8)

The reasons for rejecting returned postal votes were:

- vote received too late (6)
- returned to sender (7)
- postal vote not signed (2)
- ordinary vote issued (i.e. elector marked off as having voted in person) (1)
- vote dated too late (1)

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 Victoria Daly Regional Council the table below shows the declaration votes admitted to the count and those rejected.

Declaration voting statistics – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Accepted	Rejected	Total
9	1	10

The reason for rejecting the declaration vote was because this elector was 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 issue 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 – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Location	Votes issued
Alice Springs	1
Katherine	2
Palmerston	1
Yarrowonga	1
Total	5

Participation

Turnout for the Victoria Daly Regional Council election was 33.2%, with Pine Creek Ward on 54.5% (110 electors out of 202) and Timber Creek Ward on 22.6% (92 electors out of 407).

The turnout rate was down from the previous elections in 2017 where the council had a turnout rate of 39.9% (when 3 wards had elections go ahead). At these elections, Pine Creek Ward had a turnout rate of 53.0% (116 electors out of 219 enrolled), Timber Creek Ward had 42.3% (173 electors out of 409) and Walangeri Ward had 27.0% (80 electors out of 296 enrolled).

Number of votes counted by voting centre type – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Voting centre	Number of votes counted	% of total votes
Remote and urban mobile teams	126	62.4%
Early (other regions)	24	11.9%
Postal	38	18.8%
Absent	5	2.5%
Declaration	9	4.4%
Total	202	100%

Non-voters

There were 415 identified non-voters across the council area. The table below shows the age and gender demographics of these non-voters.

Non-voter statistics – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Gender	18-29 years	30-49 years	50-69 years	70+ years	Total
Female	37	85	46	18	186
Male	42	105	57	25	229
Total	79	190	103	43	415

Informality

Of the 202 ballot papers counted, only were considered informal and so not counted. This is an informality rate of 1.5%, the lowest for all council areas for these general elections.

Informal vote statistics – Tiwi Islands Regional Council

Ballot paper	Intentional	Unintentional	Total
Pine Creek	0	0	0
Timber Creek	3	0	3
Total	3	0	3

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 were counted at the Darwin scrutiny centre.

Post-election night scrutines

- 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 8 candidates contesting 5 councillor vacancies. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in the tables below.

Election of 1 councillor – Daguragu Ward

At the close of nominations the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and **Georgina MACLEOD** was duly declared elected.

Election of 1 councillor – Milngin Ward

At the close of nominations the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and **Andy MCTAGGART** was duly declared elected.

Election of 1 councillor – Pine Creek Ward

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

Candidate	First preferences
Alain DENOUEL	18
Lizzie SULLIVAN	16
Yvette WILLIAMS	76
Total	110

The quota required under the proportional representation voting system was 56. No distribution of preferences was required as a candidate reached the quota on first preferences, so in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- **Yvette WILLIAMS** received the quota at count number 1

Yvette WILLIAMS was duly elected.

Election of 1 councillor – Timber Creek Ward

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

Candidate	First preferences
Reg KING	40
Shirley Anne GARLETT	49
Total	89

The quota required under the proportional representation voting system was 45. As there were only 2 candidates a distribution of preferences was not required, so in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (*Electoral*) Regulations the results were as follows:

- **Shirley Anne GARLETT** received the quota at count number 1

Shirley Anne GARLETT was duly elected.

Election of 1 councillor – Walangeri Ward

At the close of nominations the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and **Brian PEDWELL** was duly declared elected.

Declaration of the election results

The declaration of election results took place at the NTEC office at 80 Mitchell Street Darwin at 2:00pm on Monday 13 September 2021.

Declared election results for Victoria Daly Regional Council

Ward	Elected members
Daguragu Ward (1 vacancy)	Georgina MACLEOD
Milngin Ward (1 vacancy)	Andy MCTAGGART
Pine Creek Ward (1 vacancy)	Yvette WILLIAMS
Timber Creek Ward (1 vacancy)	Shirley Anne GARLETT
Walangeri Ward (1 vacancy)	Brian PEDWELL

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

ELECTION COSTS**Estimate of costs – Victoria Daly Regional Council**

Election area	Estimated cost
Public awareness	\$3,762
Staffing	\$20,737
Operational	\$14,032
Sub total	\$38,531
10% GST	\$3,853
Total estimated cost	\$42,384

Actual costs – Victoria Daly Regional Council

Election area	Actual cost
Public awareness	\$2,400
Staffing	\$21,367
Operational	\$4,343
Sub total	\$28,110
10% GST	\$2,811
Total actual cost	\$30,921

POST-ELECTION DEBRIEF

A debrief of the election activities and outcomes took place with the Victoria Daly Regional Council on 19 October 2021. Overall, the council were satisfied with the level of services provided by the NTEC, although participation was down from the previous election. When asked about whether extended voting options (like council delivery centres) could be an option to try at the next election, the council agreed that Timber Creek's growing population and changing needs in particular would warrant consideration of these.

The council confirmed that a significant proportion of their electors have access to social media and that this was a good means of engagement for future elections.

The council stated that their understanding was that the quote provided was to service all 5 wards, but that only 2 wards went to election, and they were expecting the actual costs to be lower. They also shared that they had received a complaint from a candidate from a ward that did go to election, that several communities in that ward had not received expected services as a result of the council 'not paying enough'. NTEC was not aware of this complaint.

ISSUES OF NOTE

- The number and location of communities visited in the ward in this election is the same as that in the 2020 Territory election and the 2016 local government general election, there were no changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- NTEC to develop communications with all councils explaining the methodology for estimating costs including direct costs and proportioned costs associated with elections. This communication will identify costs which are likely to adjust should wards not poll.
- NTEC and council to consider ways of educating stakeholders about the potential for reduced services where wards do not go election.