



2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

LITCHFIELD COUNCIL 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 held 12 months after the Legislative Assembly (LA) elections.
- In November 2015 the council was dismissed and a general election was called under section 84 of the LGA.
- 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.
- Elizabeth West was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Litchfield Council, 2017 NT Council elections.
- Electronic mark-off system (eLAPPS) was used at all voting centres.
- An election charter **detailing the NTEC's service** commitments was finalised on 29 May 2017 and made available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Litchfield Council and the NTEC was entered into on 5 April 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

Council

Litchfield Council consists four wards: Central, East, North and South. The council comprises one elected Mayor and one elected councillor per ward.

As per the SLA, Litchfield Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections.

- Use of a council building (Whitewood Hall, Howard Springs) as an election day voting centre.
- Promotion of the election through social media and at waste disposal stations.
- Council staff facilitated the lodgement of nominations.

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 at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 12,268 electors enrolled for Litchfield Council. This was an 11 per cent increase on the enrolment of 11,046 at the 2012 General elections and a six per cent increase on the enrolment of 11,561 at the 2015 Litchfield Council election.

COUNCIL	WARD	ENROLMENT
Litchfield Council	Central	2,539
	East	2,943
	North	3,013
	South	3,773
TOTAL		12,268

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 Rural Weekly, NT News and Off the Leash magazine.

Online promotion of these ads also took place with the Rural Weekly, Alice Springs News and 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.

Posters promoting enrolment, nominations and voting were provided to Litchfield Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections. Elector information cards, that promoted online enrolment and key election dates, were distributed by council staff at waste transfer stations in Humpty Doo and Howard Springs.

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 held at the Litchfield Council office with five participants attending. All five were current sitting members.

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.

A NTEC staff member also provided a general election overview session to Litchfield Council staff.

Email and SMS

Email and SMS was used to contact 4,708 electors in Litchfield whom provided these details on their enrolment form. Across the Northern Territory, 30,000 emails were sent advising electors about early and election-day voting centres. At 10:00 am on election day a voting reminder SMS was sent to **2,200 Litchfield 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 six nominations for councillor across the four wards and three nominations for Mayor.

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 Litchfield Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Mayor (1 position)	Doug BARDEN
	Grant KEETLEY
	Maree BREDHAUER
Central Ward Councillor (1 position)	Christine OSBORN
East Ward Councillor (1 position)	Kev HARLAN
	Kirsty HUNT
North Ward Councillor (1 position)	Mathew SALTER
	Grant KEETLEY
South Ward Councillor (1 position)	Doug BARDEN

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. To support the Litchfield Council area, an early voting centre was located at Coolalinga Shopping Centre which processed 3,245 votes.

In consultation with council, a decision was made that votes would not be issued at the Litchfield Council office. This did not adversely affect voter turnout and there were no complaints received.

Votes for Litchfield Council were also issued at other early voting centres across the Territory.

Votes issued at NT early voting centres for Litchfield Council

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Alice Springs Council	7
Tennant Creek Civic Hall	2
Katherine Central Shopping Centre	15
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	3,245
Casuarina Library	98
Darwin CBD	183

Postal voting

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

There were 388 postal vote issued for Litchfield Council with 253 for Mayor; 60 for East Ward and 62 for North Ward admitted to the count.

Postal votes admitted to the count are contained in a declaration envelope. There could be 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 contained a ballot paper. Some electors who applied for a postal vote ultimately decided to vote in person.

Election day voting centres

Election day was Saturday 26 August with voting centres open from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm. On election day, voters had to vote within their council boundary. Voting centre locations are listed below.

Bees Creek: Primary School, 20 Sattler Cres

Berry Springs: Primary School, 1150 Cox Peninsula Rd

Howard Springs: Whitewood Hall, 325 Whitewood Rd

Humpty Doo: Taminmin College, Challoner Crct

Note: The voting centre in Berrimah (Kormilda College) was not used for this election. This was agreed to by NTEC and Litchfield Council.

Votes issued for Litchfield Council at election day voting centres

VOTING CENTRE	MAYOR	EAST WARD	NORTH WARD
Bees Creek	812	137	49
Berry Springs	565	4	548
Howard Springs	1,476	161	1,032
Humpty Doo	1,402	687	37
TOTAL	4,255	989	1,666

There has been a decrease of 32 per cent in the number of electors voting on election day compared to the 2012 General elections. This is due to the growing trend of electors choosing to vote early.

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 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 scrutiny centre in Darwin City.

Post-election night scrutines

A recheck of votes from voting centres was undertaken during the week after election day, followed by a count of declaration, absent and further postal votes.

Vote counting for the Mayor vacancy was completed manually and votes received for the councillor vacancies were entered into an electronic count system (Easy count) and then re-entered for verification purposes.

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 included in 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 on Friday, 1 September 2017.

Election outcomes for Litchfield Council

There were three candidates contesting the Mayor position and six candidates contesting four councillor positions across four wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

Of the 12,268 electors enrolled in Litchfield Council a total of 8,059 (67 per cent) voted in the 2017 NT Council elections. This was a decrease of 3 per cent compared to the 2012 General election.

Election of Mayor

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Doug BARDEN	2,381
Grant KEETLEY	1,130
Maree BREDHAUER	4,042
TOTAL	7,553

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 3,777.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Maree Bredhauer received the quota at count number 1

Maree Bredhauer was duly elected.

Election of one Councillor – Central Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Christine Osborn was declared elected.

Election of one Councillor – East Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Kev HARLAN	750
Kirsty HUNT	1,266
TOTAL	2,016

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 1,009.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Kirsty Hunt received the quota at count number 1

Kirsty Hunt was duly elected.

Election of one Councillor – North Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Mathew SALTER	1,059
Grant KEETLEY	614
TOTAL	1,673

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 838.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations the results were as follows:

- Mathew Salter received the quota at count number 1

Mathew Salter was duly elected.

Election of one Councillor – South Ward

On 3 August 2017, Doug Barden was the only nomination received. As he had nominated for both principal and ordinary member the South Ward vacancy could not be determined. As a result of the declaration of the Mayor position, Doug Barden was duly elected as councillor for South Ward.

Declaration of the election results

The results were declared at Litchfield Council at 10:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

Declared election results for Litchfield Council

MAYOR (1 vacancy)	CENTRAL WARD (1 vacancy)	EAST WARD (1 vacancy)	NORTH WARD (1 vacancy)	SOUTH WARD (1 vacancy)
Maree BREDHAUER	Christine OSBORN	Kirsty HUNT	Matthew SALTER	Doug BARDEN

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 Litchfield Council to be \$136,709. Following the election there was no variation to the estimated costs.

Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$27,233
Staffing	\$64,136
Premises	\$8,400
Operational costs	\$36,940
TOTAL	\$136,709

ISSUES OF NOTE

Early voting centre

- The Bendigo Bank community room at Coolalinga Shopping Centre was used as an early voting centre instead of the Litchfield Council offices. Voter turnout of 3,547 at this venue indicates that electors support the convenience of the venue.
- Given the high number of early votes taken at the centre, in the future, a larger venue may be required.

Election day

- Feedback received post-election identified the need for increased promotion on the inability for electors to vote outside their council area on election day. Particularly in areas like Knuckey's Lagoon and Robertson Barracks where some electors presented at centres in the Darwin area, only to be turned away. **These electors' names were** added to the non-voter excuse register.

Non-voters

- A total 3,603 electors were identified as failing to vote in the 2017 NT Council elections for Litchfield Council. A valid and sufficient reason for not voting was provided by 236 electors.

Informality

- In the post-election phase, once the 21 day period for objections had expired, a survey of informal ballot papers was conducted. A total of 506 informal votes were received for Mayor, 122 for East Ward and 130 for North Ward.
- During the informality survey it was identified that 85 per cent of the informal votes for Mayor, 89 per cent for East Ward Councillor and 96 per cent for North Ward Councillor were considered intentionally informal i.e. either left blank or contained the same number in all boxes.

In summary it was evident that voters had made a conscience decision to make their vote informal. This is a common finding at a number of council elections.