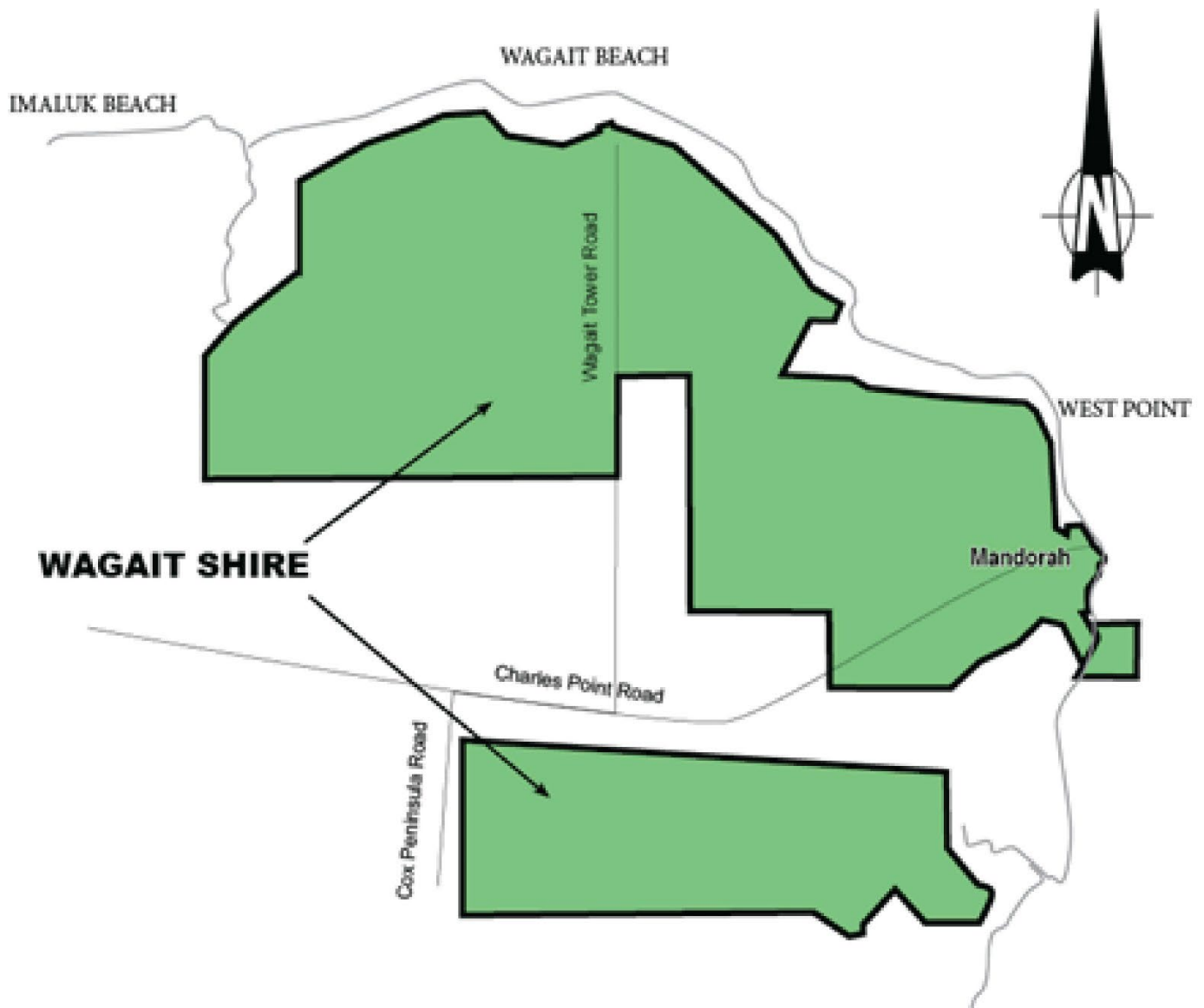


# Wagait Shire Council Election Report



**NOTE:** Electors residing elsewhere in Cox Peninsula are **NOT** required to vote as this area is unincorporated (unless part of Belyuen Community Government Council). For further information contact the NTEC.

## NTEC version control

### 2021 Local Government elections - Wagait Shire Council Report

Version Number	Purpose/change	Author	Date
1.0	Final version approved by K. Kelly	K. Kelly NTEC	21/12/2021
1.1	Addition of version control	M. O'Brien	12/04/2022

#### Disclaimer

Copyright © 2022. This document may not be reproduced without permission. This document is controlled and has been released electronically. The version the NTEC website is the up to date document. Hard copies are uncontrolled and may not be up to date. Users of hard copies should confirm the revision by comparing it with the electronically controlled version

The latest version is accessible via the NTEC website at [ntec.nt.gov.au](http://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
		<b>Election day</b>
	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

<b>BACKGROUND</b>	1
Elections	1
Legislation	1
Service Charter	1
Service Level Agreement	1
<b>BOUNDARY CHANGES</b>	1
<b>ENROLMENT</b>	2
<b>PUBLIC AWARENESS</b>	2
Campaign overview	2
Website	2
Website engagement	2
Newsletters	3
Advertising – radio, television, social media	3
Direct digital and print advertising	3
Television	4
Radio	4
Social Media	4
Call centre	5
Candidate information sessions	5
Email and SMS	5
Other promotional activities	5
<b>VOTING SERVICES</b>	5
Nominations	5
Electronic mark-off	6
<b>ELECTION</b>	6
Early voting	6
Remote mobile voting	6
Mobile voting – urban institutions	7
Postal voting	7
Declaration votes	7
Election day voting centres – Absent Voting	8
Participation	8
Number of votes by voting centre – Wagait Shire Council	8
Non-voters	8
Informality	8
Voting system	9
Vote counting – election night	9
Post-election night scrutinies	9
<b>ELECTION OUTCOMES</b>	9
Election of 5 councillors	9
Declaration of election results	10
<b>ELECTION COSTS</b>	10
<b>POST-ELECTION DEBRIEF</b>	11
<b>ISSUES OF NOTE</b>	11

For more information go to [www.ntec.nt.gov.au](http://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 Wagait Shire Council, there was 1 election for 5 councillor positions.

### **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 21 May 2021, Wagait Shire 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)
- the use of council owned premises for the mobile voting team
- staff to provide an early voting service for two weeks and between 8am to 12 noon on election day
- promotion of the election via its social media outlets
- placement of banners and signage at prominent locations around Wagait Beach at no cost.

## **BOUNDARY CHANGES**

There were no boundary or representative structure changes as a result of the representation review of Wagait Shire 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 299 electors enrolled in the Wagait Shire Council. This was a decrease of 11 (or 3.7%) from the 2017 NT Council elections.

## 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 Wagait Shire Council results and information page engagement, prior to and post election day.

### Website engagement

<b>Total website page views</b>	<b>865,814</b>
Wagait Shire councillor results page views	1,186
Wagait Shire list of councillor candidates	439
All other Wagait related page views	977
<b>Total Wagait content related page views</b>	<b>2,602</b>

## 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 ads 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.advertisements.

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

### Television

Network	Dates aired	Number of advertisements
<b>Channel 7 Darwin</b>	04/07/2021-28/08/2021	202
Channel 7 Central		<b>228</b>
<b>Channel 9</b>		78
Imparja		127
ICTV		120
<b>ABA</b>		<b>124</b>
<b>Bold:</b> Channels aired throughout Wagait Shire Council region		<b>Total 879</b>

### Radio

Network	Dates aired	Number of advertisements
<b>Hot 100</b>	04/07/2021-28/08/2021	<b>158</b>
<b>Mix FM</b>		<b>157</b>
CAAMA		168
<b>TEABBA</b>		<b>109</b>
<b>ABA</b>		<b>141</b>
Yolngu Radio		104
Sun FM		104
8HA		104
<b>Bold:</b> Channels aired throughout Wagait Shire Council region		<b>Total 1,045</b>

### Social Media

Campaign	Reach	Impressions	Click through rate
<b>2021 Local Government Election - overall</b>	168,472	2,825,293	1.07%*
<b>Wagait Shire geo-targeted ads#</b>	98,620	743,864	0.94%

\*Industry standard 0.89%

#Due to its proximity to Darwin City, Wagait Shire council area was included in the City of Darwin social media campaign. Figures do not include statistics for ads that were run Territory wide.



### 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

One candidate information session was organised by LGANT in partnership with the council, which the NTEC presented at. The table below provides details about this session.

Date	Location	No. of attendees
22 July	Wagait Shire Council	4

### 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 Wagait Shire Council area received 4 messages before election day, 28 August. Details of those messages are provided in the table below.

Message	Email	Date Sent	SMS	Date Sent
Enrolment	144	19-07-2021	178	22-07-2021
Voting suspended (COVID-19)	13*	16-08-2021	165	16-08-2021
Vote now, early voting (post lockdown)	135	19-08-2021	165	19-08-2021
Last day/s to vote#	87	26-08-2021	83	28-08-2021
<b>Totals</b>	<b>379</b>		<b>591</b>	

\*Sent only if no SMS contact and if elector had not already voted

#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.

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 16 July, 2021 and closed on Thursday 5 August, 2021 at 12:00 noon. For Wagait Shire Council, there were a total of 6 accepted nominations for 5 council vacancies.

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.

**Wagait Shire council – summary of accepted nominations/candidates**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Nominations</b>
<b>Councillor (5 vacancies)</b>	Michael VAUGHAN
	Neil WHITE
	Tom DYER
	Rick GOSPER
	Noeletta MCKENZIE
	Peter CLEE

**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****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 Wagait Shire Council electors.

**Early voting statistics - Wagait Shire Council**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Votes issued</b>
Casuarina EVC	4
Coolalinga EVC	5
Darwin EVC	12
Yarrowonga EVC	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>

**Remote mobile voting**

Voting services were provided at the council office during the early voting period from Monday 16 August to Friday 27 August, and on election day, Saturday 28 August, as part of the service level agreement. A council staff member was trained to manage the voting centre. This was considered a remote mobile voting team for NTEC's purposes, and 183 votes were issued over the early voting and election day period.

### 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 Wagait Shire 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 Wagait Shire Council electors.

### Postal voting statistics – Wagait Shire Council

Description	Number
Number of postal vote applications received	23
Number of postal votes issued	19
Number of postal vote applications rejected	4
Number of postal votes returned	16
Number of postal votes added to the count	13
Number of postal votes rejected	3

The reasons for rejecting postal vote applications were:

- multiple applications received from the same elector (3)
- cancelled on request by the elector (1)

The reasons for rejecting returned postal votes were:

- postal vote not signed (2)
- vote received too late (1)

### Declaration votes

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 Wagait Shire Council the table below shows the declaration votes admitted to the count and those rejected.

### Declaration vote statistics

Accepted	Rejected	Total
2	0	2

### 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, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs voting centres on election day.

### Absent vote statistics (election day voting centres) – Wagait Shire Council

Location	Votes issued
Casuarina	2
Darwin City	10
Yarrowonga	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

### Participation

Turnout for the Wagait Shire Council election was 78.6%. That means 235 electors voted out of a total enrolment figure of 299. The turnout rate was slightly higher than at the previous local government general election in 2017 (75.9%)

### Number of votes by voting centre – Wagait Shire Council

Voting centre	Number of votes counted	% of total votes
Remote mobile team	183	77.9%
Early (other regions)	23	9.8%
Postal	13	5.5%
Absent	14	6.0%
Declaration	2	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Non-voters

There were 66 identified non-voters across the council area. The table below shows the age and gender demographics of these non-voters.

### Non-voter statistics – Wagait Shire Council

Gender	18-29 years	30-49 years	50-69 years	70+ years	Total
Female	2	12	14	5	33
Male	2	7	18	6	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>66</b>

### Informality

Of the 235 ballot papers counted, 10 were considered informal and so not counted. This is an informality rate of 4.3%.

**Informal vote statistics**

Intentional	Unintentional	Total
7	3	10

**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 voting centre. First preference votes cast at early and mobile voting centres 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 6 candidates contesting 5 councillor vacancies. The successful candidates and first preference votes received where relevant are detailed below.

**Election of 5 councillors**

At the close of nominations there were 6 candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

Candidate	First preference votes
Michael VAUGHAN	95
Neil WHITE	39
Tom DYER	19
Rick GOSPER	20
Noeletta MCKENZIE	24
Peter CLEE	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>

The quota required under the proportional representation voting system was 38.

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

- **Michael VAUGHAN** received the quota at count number 1
- **Neil WHITE** received the quota at count number 1
- **Tom DYER** received the quota at count number 2
- **Noeletta MCKENZIE** received the quota at count number 4
- **Peter CLEE** received the quota at count number 5

**Michael VAUGHAN, Neil WHITE, Tom DYER, Noeletta MCKENZIE** and **Peter CLEE** were duly elected

### Declaration of election results

The declaration of election results for Wagait Shire Council for 5 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.

## ELECTION COSTS

### Estimate of Cost – Wagait Shire Council

Election area	Estimated cost
Public Awareness	\$675
Staffing	\$4,049
Operational	\$1,436
Sub Total	\$6,160
10% GST	\$616
<b>Total estimated cost</b>	<b>\$6,776</b>

**Actual Costs – Wagait Shire Council**

<b>Election area</b>	<b>Actual cost</b>
Public Awareness	\$429
Staffing	\$3,437
Operational	\$590
Sub Total	\$4,456
10% GST	\$446
<b>Total actual cost</b>	<b>\$4,902</b>

As the council provided a staff member to undertake the majority of voting services at the council office, the main cost savings were identified related to staff expenses.

**POST-ELECTION DEBRIEF**

A debrief of the election activities and outcomes took place with the Wagait Shire Council on 8 November 2021. Overall, the council were satisfied with the level of services provided by the NTEC.

Council assisted the NTEC with placements of banners and posters throughout the council area. It was discussed that, for future elections, additional placement of banners at the ferry could be beneficial.

In previous elections, there was a local media supplier (the Wagaiter), that provided opportunities for potential candidates to provide information about themselves to the community. Council noted the importance of candidates reaching out to the community to raise their profile and promote themselves.

**ISSUES OF NOTE**

- The model used for the voting services for this election was deemed effective in providing electors more opportunity to vote within the council area, for an extended period of time.
- No formal complaints were received in relation to the Wagait Shire Council election.
- The Commission would like to extend its thanks to Renita Glencross and Pam Wanrooy for the support provided.