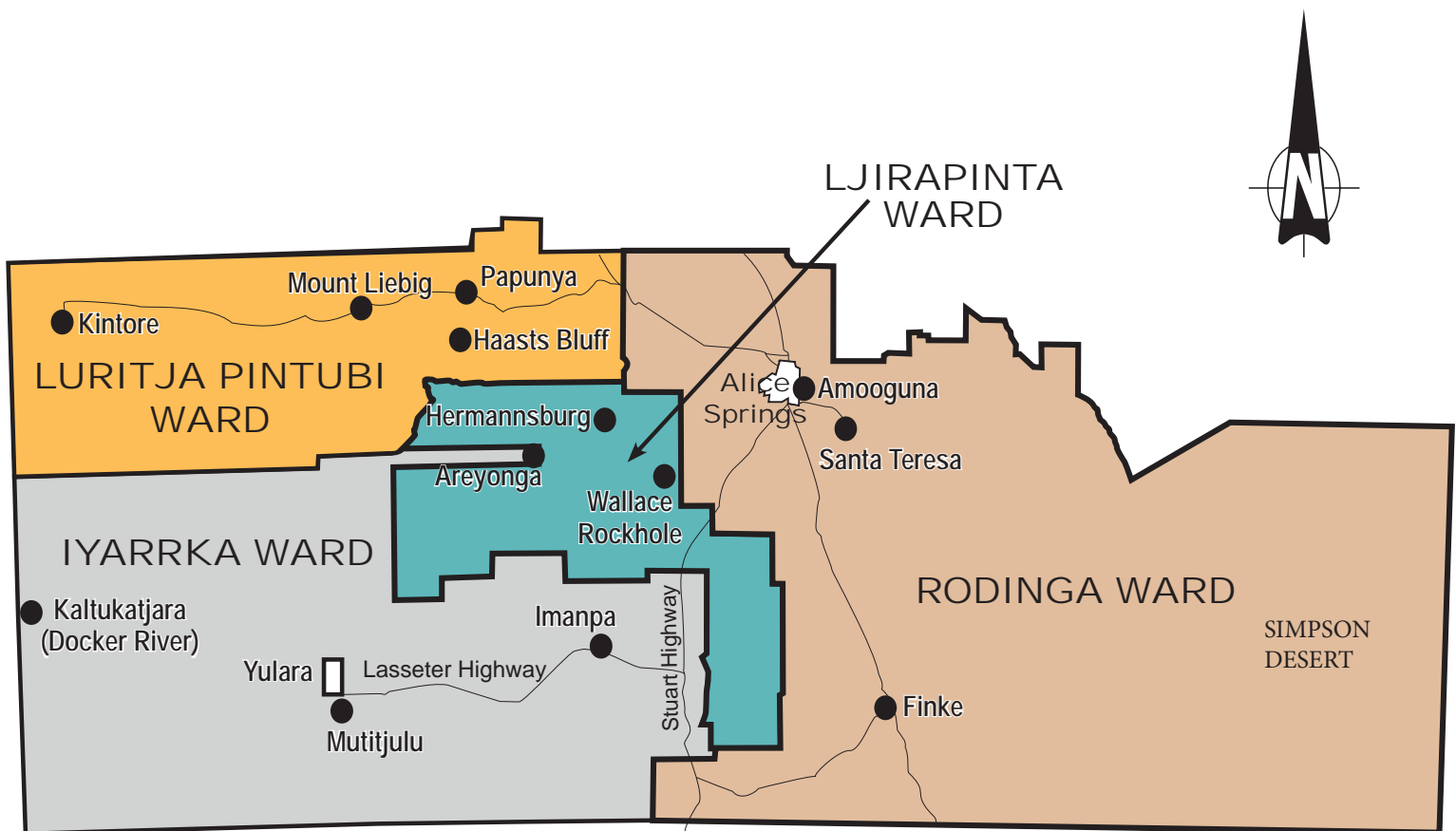




2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

MACDONNELL REGIONAL 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 Legislative Assembly (LA) elections.
- 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.
- Blake Hartman was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the MacDonnell Regional 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 16 May 2017 and sent to the council. The document was also available on the website
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the MacDonnell Regional Council and the NTEC was entered into on 13 June 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

Council

MacDonnell Regional Council consists of four wards: Iyarrka, Ljirapinta, Luritja Pintubi, and Rodinga.

The council consists of 12 elected council members. This includes two elected councillors from Iyarrka Ward, three elected councillors from Ljirapinta Ward, three elected councillors from Luritja Pintubi Ward and four elected councillors from Rodinga Ward.

As per the SLA, MacDonnell Regional Council provided/undertook the following for the 2017 NT Council elections:

- The use of council owned accommodation and premises in remote communities.
- Promotion of the election through social media and council sites.
- Council staff to act as community assistants during remote mobile voting.
- Providing a council vehicle for remote mobile voting.
- An electoral roll cleansing exercise.

Boundary changes

There were no gazetted changes to the boundaries resulting from the 2015 review of electoral representation.

ENROLMENT

Enrolment initiatives specific to MacDonnell Regional Council included an electoral roll cleansing project that commenced in March and concluded in June. The project identified a number of deceased and duplicated electors that were removed from the electoral roll.

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July 2017 at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 3,615 electors enrolled for MacDonnell Regional Council. This is an 8 per cent increase on the enrolment of 3,314 at the 2012 General elections.

Enrolment numbers by ward

COUNCIL	WARD	ENROLMENT
MacDonnell Regional Council	Iyarrka	780
	Ljirapinta	733
	Luritja Pintubi	955
	Rodinga	1,147
	TOTAL electors	3,615

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 in July 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. A total of 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, Centralian Advocate, 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 made available to MacDonnell Regional Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections.

Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Centralian Advocate and the NT News.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and the election participation through 12 interviews with Northern Territory media including ABC Alice Springs, MIX104.9, Aboriginal Broadcasting Network, CAAMA radio and the Centralian Advocate.

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

Email and SMS

Email was used to contact over 200 electors in the MacDonnell Regional Council area who 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. A further 98 SMS' were sent to MacDonnell Regional Council electors reminding them to vote on election day.

VOTING SERVICES

Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 14 July and closed on Thursday 3 August at 12:00 noon. There were a total of 17 nominations for councillor across four wards.

The declaration of nominations took place at the Alice Springs 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 MacDonnell Regional Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Iyarrka Ward Councillor (2 positions)	Marlene ABBOTT
	Selina KULITJA
Ljirapinta Ward Councillor (3 positions)	Barry ABBOTT
	Braydon WILLIAMS
	Roxanne KENNY
Luritja Pintubi Ward Councillor (3 positions)	Irene WILPINTA
	Sid ANDERSON
	Lance ABBOTT
	Tommy CONWAY
Rodinga Ward Councillor (4 positions)	Giselle BARKU
	Susan Sandra DOOLAN
	Richard DOOLAN
	Lynette A ELLIS
	Katherine YOUNG
	Greg SHARMAN
	Lisa SHARMAN
Phillip WILYUKA	

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

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. Voting for MacDonnell Regional Council was facilitated by remote voting teams.

Votes issued at NT early voting centres for MacDonnell Regional Council

LOCATION	VOTES
Alice Springs Council	77
Tennant Creek Civic Hall	2
Katherine Central Shopping Centre	1
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	0
Casuarina Library	1
Darwin CBD	1

Postal voting

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

There were 93 postal votes applied for within the MacDonnell Regional Council area, and 45 (48 per cent) admitted to the count.

Remote voting

Remote voting teams visited the following locations in the lead-up to election day. The teams issued votes for MacDonnell Regional Council only.

Number of votes issued by remote voting teams

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Amoonguna	26
Finke	42
Haasts Bluff	41
Kintore	65
Mbunghara	16
Mr Leibig	59
Papunya	115
Santa Teresa	54
Titjikala	74
Walkabout Bore	7

Election day voting centre

Election day was Saturday 26 August. There were no election day voting centres for MacDonnell Regional Council as voting was conducted by remote voting teams.

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

Immediately after the close of voting at 6:00pm on election day, there was:

- a count of the first preference votes at each voting centre
- a count of the first preference votes for early/mobile and postal votes at the Alice Spring scrutiny centre.

Post-election night scrutines

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

All votes received for the MacDonnell Regional Councillor positions 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 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 MacDonnell Regional Council

There were 17 candidates contesting 12 councillor positions across four wards. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

Voter participation by ward

There were 2,102 electors enrolled in the MacDonnell Regional Council Wards of Luritja Pintubi and Rodinga for the 2017 NT Council elections, a total of 629 (30 per cent) voted.

WARD	ENROLMENT AT 25 JULY 2017	FORMAL VOTES	INFORMAL VOTES	TOTAL
Iyarrka Ward	780	<i>Voting not required</i>		
Ljirapinta Ward	733	<i>Voting not required</i>		
Luritja Pintubi Ward	955	304	15	319
Rodinga Ward	1,147	284	26	310

Election of two Councillors – Iyarrka Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Marlene Abbott and Selina Kulitja were elected.

Election of three Councillors – Ljirapinta Ward

At the close of nominations on Thursday 3 August 2017 the number of candidates was not more than the number of vacancies and Barry Abbott, Braydon Williams and Roxanne Kenny were elected.

Election of three Councillors – Luritja Pintubi Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Irene WILPINTA	24
Sid ANDERSON	173
Lance ABBOTT	48
Tommy CONWAY	35
Giselle BARKU	24
TOTAL	304

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 77.

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

- Sid Anderson received the quota at count number 1
- Lance Abbott received the quota at count number 2
- Tommy Conway received the quota at count number 5

Sid Anderson, Lance Abbott and Tommy Conway were duly elected.

Election of four Councillors – Rodinga Ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Susan Sandra DOOLAN	27
Richard DOOLAN	30
Lynette A ELLIS	46
Katherine YOUNG	25
Greg SHARMAN	24
Lisa SHARMAN	11
Phillip WILYUKA	121
TOTAL	284

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 57.

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

- Phillip Wilyuka received the quota at count number 1
- Greg Sharman received the quota at count number 4
- Lynette A Ellis received the quota at count number 6
- Susan Sandra Doolan received the quota at count number 10

Phillip Wilyuka, Greg Sharman, Lynette A Ellis and Susan Sandra Doolan were duly elected.

Declaration of the results

The election results were declared at the MacDonnell Regional Council office in Alice Springs at 12:00 noon on Monday 4 September 2017.

Declared election results for MacDonnell Regional Council

IYARRKA WARD	LJIRAPINTA WARD	LURITJA PINTUBI WARD	RODINGA WARD
Marlene ABBOTT Selina KULITJA	Barry ABBOTT Braydon WILLIAMS Roxanne KENNY	Sid Anderson Lance Abbott Tommy Conway	Phillip Wilyuka Greg Sharman Lynette A Ellis Susan Sandra Doolan

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 MacDonnell Regional Council to be \$49,175. Following the election, the cost was \$42,030 with a difference of \$7,144.

The difference in cost is a result of the following variances:

- two wards not going to an election
- a reduction in voting centre costs
- a reduction in remote voting team accommodation and wages
- a reduction in printing.

Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$10,924
Staffing	\$20,013
Operational costs	\$11,093
TOTAL	\$42,030

ISSUES OF NOTE

Voting

- It was noted that due to events and carnivals during the voting period, many remote electors were not present and this was reflected in the low voter turnout of 30 per cent.
- The low turnout is reflective of voter disengagement issues amongst remote electors. It is noted that council staff and staff of the Department of Housing and Community Development were active in the promotion of the election.
- The MacDonnell Regional Council supplied communities with material informing voters how to complete a formal vote, this proved beneficial to voters and was reflected in the low informality rate. This practice should continue for future electoral events.

Informality

In the post-election phase, once the 21-day period for objections had expired, a survey of informal ballot papers for MacDonnell Regional Council was conducted.

- A total of 41 informal votes were received across all wards. During the informality survey it was identified that 73 per cent were deemed unintentionally informal, of which most had duplicated numbers or were incomplete. The remaining 27 per cent were blank ballot papers. The Rodinga Ward had a higher rate of informal votes due to the large number of candidates on the ballot paper.