



Alice Springs Town Council

by-election 2022



**Northern Territory
Electoral Commission**
EVERY vote counts!

NTEC version control

2022 Alice Springs Town Council by-election – report

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1.1	Final non-voter data and costs added	K. Parker	6.06.2023
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Election timetable

2022- Alice Springs Town Council by-election

29 October 2022

Date	Time	
Friday 7 October		Nominations open
Tuesday 11 October	5:00 pm	Electoral roll closes
Friday 14 October	12:00 noon	Nominations close
	1:00 pm	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Monday 17 October		Postal vote mail-out commences
Saturday 22 October	9:00 am	Early voting commences
Monday 24 October	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 25 October	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting dispatches cease
Thursday 27 October	6:00 pm	All postal voting dispatches cease
Friday 28 October	6:00 pm	Early voting ceases
Saturday 29 October		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 31 October	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Monday 7 November	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Friday 11 November	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
		Distribution of preferences
	6:30 pm	Declaration of the election result

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

BACKGROUND

Election

A by-election for the Alice Springs Town Council was caused by the resignation of Councillor Jimmy Cocking. The NT Electoral Commission (NTEC) was advised of the vacancy on 1 July 2022 and were requested to run the by-election on behalf of the council.

Election day for the by-election was Saturday 29 October with the successful candidate declared on Friday 11 November following a distribution of preferences.

Legislation

Section 54(2)(c) of the *Local Government Act 2019* (the Act) requires a by-election to be held where a casual vacancy occurs 18 months or more before the next general election. The by-election must be held within four months from notification of the vacancy (section 136(4) of the Act).

Section 136(7) of the Act allows a council to appoint their CEO or another person (other than the Electoral Commissioner) to be the returning officer for the by-election. The process to be followed including passing the resolution and notifying the Electoral Commissioner is set out in section 136 of the Act. If a person is not appointed, the by-election is to be conducted as decided by the Electoral Commissioner.

Recent legislative changes

The 2021 Local Government Elections were the first elections conducted under the new *Local Government Act 2019* and consequently updated Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021, both of which commenced 1 July 2021.

The relevant electoral legislative changes from the new Act and updated regulations were reported in the Alice Springs Town Council report for the 2021 Local Government Elections.

However, new financial disclosure requirements for local government elections, although part of the new Act, did not come into effect until 1 July 2022. This means they did not apply to the 2021 general elections, but did apply to the by-election. See financial disclosure paragraphs on pages 13 - 14 for more details.

Service level agreement

A service level agreement (SLA) between the Alice Springs Town Council and the NTEC was signed by both parties on 27 September 2022 and established the costing program for the preparation and conduct of the by-election.

The SLA stated that the NTEC will apply the requirements of the Act and regulations, and provided details of the voting services. The SLA also detailed any services provided or facilitated by the council that would offset the final costs.

For this by-election, the Alice Springs Town Council opted to provide or facilitate the following:

- candidate information sessions
- promotion of the election via its social media outlets
- banner space on council signage locations at no cost
- use of an electronic advertising board
- the Andy McNeill Room as both an early voting centre and election day voting centre at no cost.

BOUNDARY CHANGES

There were no boundary or representative structure reviews to the Alice Springs Town Council area conducted prior to the election.

ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 11 October at 5:00pm, there was a total of 16,121 electors enrolled in the Alice Springs Town Council area. This is a 2.3% increase in enrolment from the previous general elections held in August 2021.

CANDIDATES

Candidate information sessions

The Alice Springs Town Council facilitated 2 information sessions for potential candidates. These were held in the Andy McNeill Room on 6 October at 5:00 pm and 12 October at 12:00 noon. Only 2 potential candidates attended, as did the mayor, some current councillors and council staff to provide information and answer questions about what being a councillor entails. The NTEC also attended to provide information about the nomination process, campaigning rules, financial disclosure, and the count process and scrutineering.

Nominations

Nominations opened Friday 7 October and closed on Friday 14 October at 12:00 noon. There was a total of 5 accepted nominations for the vacancy, with no rejected or withdrawn nominations.

A declaration of nominations, which includes the draw for ballot position order, took place at the Andy McNeill Room soon after the nominations closed. The event was attended by candidates, NTEC staff, council staff, the mayor and some 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.

Summary of accepted nominations/candidates

Position	Candidates in ballot paper order
Councillor (1 vacancy)	Gavin MORRIS
	Sean HEENAN
	Hugo WELLS
	David MARZEC
	Wayne WRIGHT

Communication with candidates

In addition to the election newsletter, candidates were directly emailed by the NTEC with information about:

- Invitation to attend, and the results of the declaration of nominations
- Authorisation of campaign material and display of material at voting centres and on the NTEC website
- Information about the various counts and scrutineering opportunities
- New scrutineer resources and scrutineer information session
- Update of results from various counts
- Declaration of election result
- Financial disclosure information

Scrutineer information and resources

In response to feedback from scrutineers following the 2021 Local Government Elections, the NTEC created resources and ran a scrutineer information session which both candidates and scrutineers were encouraged to attend.

The NTEC plans to continue to offer scrutineer information sessions for general elections and by-elections, with the resources to be provided to all future candidates and be available on the NTEC website.

Information about candidates

During the 2021 Local Government Elections, and for other recent council by-elections, the NTEC received multiple comments and complaints from voters that they did not know enough about the candidates to make an informed vote.

As a response to this, the NTEC included copies of candidate campaign material, provided for the display stands at the entrance to voting centres, on its website. The material was added to the 'list of candidates' webpage that previously just provided the names, photographs and contact details (where permitted) of the candidates. This was to allow all voters, not just those who attended a voting centre, access to the campaign material.

The NTEC and Alice Springs Town Council received feedback from the community that there was limited promotion and campaigning done by candidates, with some of the public wanting candidates to come to them (door knocking) to provide information about what the stand for.

While the NTEC and the council need to remain neutral in the promotion of the election and in providing information about candidates, the Local Government Association of the NT is best placed to assist candidates and does have resources to assist them.

The NTEC is considering options concerning voters' access to candidate information at elections.

VOTING SERVICES

Postal voting

All electors have the option to postal vote and all registered general postal voters enrolled in the Alice Springs Town Council area were automatically issued a postal vote and did not have to apply for one. Applications for postal votes officially opened with nominations on Friday 5 October, although any applications received before this date are not rejected, but held until they can be accepted.

Due to ongoing concerns about COVID-19, postal voting services were offered to aged care facilities (rather than in-house mobile voting as provided previously) in Alice Springs, as they were in 2020 and 2021. Postal votes were arranged for residents at Flynn Lodge Aged Care Facility, Hetti Perkins Home for the Aged and Old Timers Village. These were delivered and picked up by NTEC staff, rather than sent through the post.

While the Alice Springs Correctional Centre was visited by an urban mobile voting team, eligible prisoners located at the Darwin Correctional Centre, Barkly work camp and Datjala Work camp (Nhulunbuy) were sent postal votes.

No postal votes were sent to overseas addresses for the 2021 Local Government Elections, due to advice from Australia Post that the delivery and return of postal votes going overseas were not likely to meet the legislated timeframes due to the continued impact of COVID-19. However, postal votes were issued to overseas addresses for the by-election, as they were for other by-elections in 2022. Although 37 postal votes were sent to overseas addresses, none were returned by the cut-off date to be admitted to the count. Eventually, 2 postal votes returned from New Zealand, and one return to sender was received (as at 8 December 2022).

Postal voting statistics

Description	Number
Number of postal vote applications received	1,069
Number of postal votes issued	955
Number of postal vote applications rejected	114
Number of postal votes returned	669
Number of postal votes admitted to the count	493
Number of postal votes rejected	176

The reasons for rejecting postal vote applications were:

- multiple applications received from same elector (72)
- cancelled by elector (16)
- no election (enrolled outside the Alice Springs Town Council area) (14)
- application received too late (10)
- not enrolled (2)

The reasons for rejecting returned postal votes were:

- vote received too late (47)
- vote dated too late (45)
- postal vote not signed (43)
- returned to sender (25)
- elector removed from roll (14)
- ordinary vote issued (i.e. elector marked off as having voted in person) (2)

Early voting

Early voting commenced Saturday 22 October, and was then open from Monday 25 October to Friday 28 October at the Andy McNeill Room. The Alice Springs Town Council requested only one week of early voting, and while the NTEC prefer a 2 week early voting period, the commission accepted this request as a trial for a by-election. There were no complaints received about the one week early voting period from voters or other stakeholders.

Early voting was also available at the NTEC office in Darwin for any residents in Darwin for a 2 week early voting period. The office issued 3 early votes in total.

The table below shows the number of votes issued daily for the by-election, and also the daily votes issued at the 2021 and 2017 general elections at the Alice Springs early voting centre (located at the Andy McNeill Room for each election). These figures show that the daily number of votes issued at each election are consistent across the second week of early voting. It is unfortunately difficult to compare the first week of early voting due to a COVID-19 lockdown suspending early voting during the 2021 general election.

Early voting statistics – Votes issued at Alice Springs early voting centre 2022, 2021, 2017*

Early voting period timing	Early votes issued 2022 by-election	Early votes issued# 2021 general election	Early votes issued# 2017 general election
Week 1 – Monday	-	138 (suspended at 12pm due to lockdown)	314
Week 1 – Tuesday	-	suspended	354
Week 1 – Wednesday	-	suspended	351
Week 1 – Thursday	-	300 (opened at 1pm after lockdown lifted)	368
Week 1 – Friday	-	694	456
Week 1 – Saturday	530	542	555
Week 1 – Sunday	-	276	-
Week 2 – Monday	494	570	354
Week 2 – Tuesday	474	503	397
Week 2 – Wednesday	491	546	487
Week 2 – Thursday	540	641	523
Week 2 – Friday	961	1,066	925
TOTAL	3,490	5,276	5,084

* Note that the number of votes issued does not always equate to the number of votes counted

#Note that at general elections early voting centres issue votes for all council areas. However, at the Alice Springs early voting centre, 95.3% of votes were issued for Alice Springs electors in 2017, and in 2021 it was 96.4%

Urban mobile voting

During the week of early voting, an urban mobile voting team visited the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and Alice Springs Hospital. The team issued votes to eligible prisoners and patients, as well as staff members and visitors at the facilities.

Urban mobile voting statistics

Date visited	Location visited	Number of votes issued
Wednesday 26 October 2022	Alice Springs Correctional Centre	33
Friday 28 October 2022	Alice Springs Hospital	171
TOTAL		204

Election day voting

Election day was Saturday 29 October. For the by-election, there were 6 election day voting centres (detailed in the table below) all open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. Following discussions with the council, the number of election day voting centres was the same as the number used at the 2021 and 2017 general elections. The only change was the location of the Kilgariff voting centre which was moved to Blatherskite Park for the by-election, after being located at Desert Knowledge Australia in 2021 and at Yirara College in 2017. (Yirara College has not been available as a voting centre since COVID-19 appeared).

Election day voting statistics

Election day voting centre	Location	Votes issued*
Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council 93 Todd St, Alice Springs	1,338
Braitling	Braitling Primary School 80 Head St, Braitling	520
Gillen	Gillen Primary School 55 Milner Rd, Gillen	800
Kilgariff	Blatherskite Park Len Kittle Drive, Ilparpa	145
Larapinta	Living Waters Lutheran Primary Albrecht Drive, Larapinta	385
Sadadeen	Centralian Senior College Grevillea Drive, Sadadeen	519
TOTAL		3,707

* Note the number of votes issued does not always equate to the number of votes counted.

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 for local government elections 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 Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and eligible electors are added to the roll using the envelope as an enrolment form, where the entitlement to vote is confirmed, the vote will count. Where voters are unable to be enrolled, or are found to be already enrolled in a different council area in the NT, their declaration vote is rejected.

The table below shows the declaration votes admitted to the count and those rejected for the by-election.

Declaration voting statistics

Accepted	Rejected	Total
71	14	85

The main reasons for rejecting declaration votes were:

- elector enrolled in a different local government area in the NT at the close of roll (8)
- insufficient information to enrol the person or update their enrolment (6)

Turnout and participation

Turnout for the Alice Springs Town Council by-election was 49.2% based on the number of votes counted, with 7,934 ballot papers counted from a total enrolment figure of 16,121. The turnout for the by-election was significantly lower compared with the previous general elections for the council in 2021 (65.1%) and 2017 (70.2%).

The following table details the total number of votes by vote type for those ballot papers admitted to the count.

Number of votes counted by vote type

Vote type	2022 by-election		2021 general elections	
	No. of votes counted	% of total votes	Number of votes counted	% of total votes
Election day voting centres	3,678	46.4%	4,023	39.2%
Early voting centres	3,488	43.9%	5,085	49.6%
Urban mobile voting	204	2.6%	187	1.8%
Postal voting	493	6.2%	583	5.7%
Declaration voting	71	0.9%	216	2.1%
Absent voting*	0	0.0%	167	1.6%
TOTAL	7,934	100%	10,261	100%
Formal votes	7,559	95.3%	9,246	90.1%
Informal votes	375	4.7%	1,015	9.9%

*Absent votes were issued via early voting centres, urban mobile voting teams and election day voting centres located outside the Alice Springs Town Council area. There are no absent votes in by-elections.

#Figures used are from the 2021 councillor election

Turnout and participation statistics

Turnout	Number or percentage
Enrolment at close of roll	16,121
Total votes counted	7,934
Turnout rate – by number of votes counted	49.2%
Participation	Number or percentage
Postal vote applications rejected (voter eligible)	28
Postal votes not returned*	286
Postal votes returned but rejected*	176
Declaration votes rejected	14
Excuses lodged*	351
Total additional participation*	855
TOTAL	8,789
Participation rate	54.5%

*As at 8 December 2022

Informality

Of the 7,934 ballot papers counted, 375 (or 4.7%) were deemed to be informal and therefore not counted. Of the informal ballot papers, 339 (or 90.4%) were assumed to be intentionally informal, while 36 or 9.6% were assumed to be unintentionally informal.

ELECTION OUTCOMES

Voting system

The voting system for local government by-elections where there is just one vacancy to fill is the preferential system.

- Electors must number all the boxes on their ballot paper sequentially starting with the number one for their first choice for their vote to be formal.
- For a candidate to be elected they must receive more than 50% of the formal votes.
- First preference votes for each candidate on the formal ballot papers are counted. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the formal votes, a distribution of preferences is conducted until a candidate does.

Vote counting – election day

Vote counting began immediately after the close of voting at 6:00 pm on election day. A count of first preference votes was undertaken at each election day voting centre and phoned through to the Alice Springs scrutiny centre.

A count of first preferences of the votes cast at the Alice Springs early voting centre and with the urban mobile team were counted at the Alice Springs scrutiny centre after 6:00 pm on election day.

A count of first preferences of votes cast at the Darwin early voting centre and of the postal votes received by that date were counted at the NTEC's Darwin office after 6:00 pm on election day.

Post-election day counts

- A fresh scrutiny of all votes cast at election day voting centres, the Alice Springs early voting centre and with the urban mobile team was conducted on the Monday morning after election day (31 October) at the Alice Springs scrutiny centre.
- A fresh scrutiny of all votes cast at the Darwin early voting centre and the postal votes received before election day was also conducted on the Monday morning after election day at the NTEC office in Darwin.
- All declaration votes were forwarded to the Australian Electoral Commission for processing on the Monday morning after election day. On the Wednesday (3 November), a scrutiny of declaration envelopes began which concluded the following day.
- On the first Friday after election day (4 November), an initial count of the accepted declaration votes was conducted at the Alice Springs scrutiny centre. This was immediately followed by a fresh scrutiny of the accepted declaration votes.
- Also on the first Friday after election day, an initial count of the second intake of postal votes (received between election day and that morning) was conducted at the NTEC office in Darwin. This was immediately followed by a fresh scrutiny of the postal votes.
- Following the deadline for the receipt of postal votes at 12 noon on Friday 11 November, an initial count of the third and final intake of postal votes was conducted at the NTEC office in Darwin. This was immediately followed by a fresh scrutiny of the count.

Results from all counts, on and after election day, were published on the NTEC website at the conclusion of the count.

Distribution of preferences

After the count of the third and final intake of postal votes for the Alice Springs by-election was conducted at 12:00 noon on Friday 11 November, the total first preference count for each candidate was as follows:

Candidate	First preference votes
Gavin MORRIS	2,436
Sean HEENAN	2,407
Hugo WELLS	1,661
David MARZEC	246
Wayne WRIGHT	809
TOTAL	7,559

The number of votes required to win as per the preferential voting system (more than half, or 50% + 1) was 3,780, which no candidate received.

Following a distribution of preferences, **Gavin MORRIS** was elected at the fourth count. The table below shows the how the preferences were distributed at each count.

Count	Comment	MORRIS	HEENAN	WELLS	MARZEC	WRIGHT	TOTAL
1	First preferences*	2,436	2,408	1,661	247	807	7,559
2	MARZEC excluded Progressive	51 2,487	107 2,515	33 1,694	-247 0	56 863	0 7,559
3	WRIGHT excluded Progressive	338 2,825	242 2,757	283 1,977	0 0	-863 0	0 7,559
4	WELLS excluded Progressive	1,466 4,291	511 3,268	-1,977 0	0 0	0 0	0 7,559

*Note a discrepancy was found during the first exclusion which saw the first preference numbers corrected for some candidates.

Declaration of the election results

The declaration of election results took place at the Alice Springs Town Council at 6:30 pm on Friday 11 November 2022.

Non-voters

After an election, all enrolled electors not marked off as having voters are compiled into a list of non-voters. This list is then cleansed to remove people who did make an effort to participate in the election, for example; those who had postal vote applications rejected, electors who updated their enrolment to indicate they are overseas, electors who updated their enrolment to a different council area after the close of roll date, electors who provided a valid excuse for not voting during the election period, among others. The NTEC also removes electors aged over 70 and those in special category enrolment (like itinerant voters) are who likely to have a valid excuse for not voting but may be unable to communicate this easily.

The final list of apparent non-voters saw 6,930 initial infringement notices sent to non-voters on 24 November 2023. These notices included an opportunity to claim to have voted citing where and when, or to provide a valid reason for not voting. A follow up letter for those non-voters who had not yet replied was sent on 23 January 2023.

The table over the page provides a breakdown of the replies to these infringement notices.

Apparent non-voter statistics

Apparent non-voter mail records	Number	%
Apparent non-voters	6,930	
Responses		
Replied – penalty paid	729	10.5
Replied – valid and sufficient reason provided	1,040	15.0
Returned unclaimed and endorsed return to sender	1,013	14.6
No reply and no RTS mail to first or second notice	4,148	59.9

The NTEC conducted a short survey with non-voters who called their office as a result of receiving an infringement notice. The survey was designed to collect data about how these electors in particular prefer to receive important information or news about electoral events in order to shape future communications.

Results from the survey showed that many of the respondents got information about events from television and radio advertising, as well as social media. A high number of respondents also indicated that seeing candidate campaign corflute signs around their community usually alerted them that an election was occurring.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Campaign overview

The NTEC developed a communications plan for the Alice Springs Town Council by-election which was shared with the council. The campaign covered various phases of the election including promoting awareness and enrolment, nominations, postal voting, early voting, election day voting and results.

The NTEC had a website, targeted social media campaign, radio, direct messaging to electors, media engagement, digital and statutory advertising, banners, a stakeholder newsletter and other community activities. With a shortened early voting period for the by-election the campaign promoted the voting options available to electors with a focus on postal voting.

The Alice Springs Town Council also promoted the election through their own community newsletters, posters, social media, website and radio interviews.

Website

The website for the by-election was launched in September 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, as well as results.

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

Social media campaign

The NTEC posted a series of paid and non-paid Facebook and Instagram posts which included engaging videos and images.

Type	Reach*	Engagement#	Timing
Paid short video post – Get ready to vote	5,605	1,198	30 September
Paid image post – represent your community	4,551	497	7 October
Image post - enrolment	91	3	10 October
Image post – nominations closing	102	5	11 October

Paid short video post – postal vote	1,935	601	12 October
Image post – candidates announced	153	19	14 October
Video advert	9,810	11,524	19 October
Paid image post – Early voting opens tomorrow	3708	757	21 October
Image post – Postal vote	171	17	24 October
Paid video post – Election day fast approaching	4578	515	26 October
Image post – Election day today	407	30	29 October
Image post – Andy McNeill Room	763	54	29 October
Image post – Blatherskite Park	81	2	29 October
Image post – Braitling Primary	84	4	29 October
Image post – That's a wrap	147	51	29 October

*Reach is defined as the measurement of how many people were exposed to the post

Engagement is defined as the measurement of how many people have taken any type of action on the post

Radio

A 30 second radio advertisement promoting the election and voting locations was produced with 40 placements across channels 8HA and Sun 969 during the early voting period of 20 – 28 October.

Direct messaging to voters

Any elector who has provided either their mobile phone number or email address (or both) are able to be contacted directly by the NTEC to provide election information. Eligible electors in the Alice Springs Town Council area received 3 direct messages during the election period.

The 3 rounds of messaging provided information about:

- **Enrolment** – electors who were, at the time, enrolled in the Alice Springs Town Council area were advised of the by-election, the important dates and their requirement to vote. Electors were encouraged to update their enrolment if it was no longer current. This round of messaging often removes more electors from a council area, as they update their address, than add to it.
- **Voting has started** – electors were provided the dates, location, and opening hours of the early voting centres, as well as a link to the list of candidates.
- **Last day to vote** – electors who had not early voted or applied for a postal vote were sent further messaging remind them to vote, and information about election day voting centres.

Both the 'enrolment' and 'voting has started' emails also provided information and a link to apply for a postal vote, and reminded voters that voting, even in council by-elections, is compulsory.

Direct messaging statistics

Message	No. of emails sent	Date sent	No. of SMS sent	Date sent
Enrolment	6,783	4 October	8,654	4 October
Voting has started (early voting)	6,201	20 October	8,156	20 October
Last day/s to vote#	4,457	27 October	5,580	29 October
TOTALS	17,441		22,390	

#Sent only to electors who had not voted

Media engagement

Media releases

The NTEC sent seven media releases throughout the by-election period. Media releases were sent to the commission's email database of approximately 1,500 email addresses.

Type	Opens %	Timing
Media release 1 – Announced	36.6%	30 September
Media release 2 – Nominations open	35.2%	7 October
Media release 3 – Declaration of nominations	34%	14 October
Media release 4 – Early voting open	33.4%	22 October
Media release 5 – Election day fast approaching	31.6%	26 October
Media release 6 – Election day today	29.4%	29 October
Media release 7 – Election night counting	31.2%	30 October

Media coverage

Following the distribution of the NTEC's media releases, Northern Territory media outlets covered the key messages of these releases with the following coverage:

Released by	Type	ASR (advertising sale rate)	Timing
Alice Springs Town Council	Facebook post	\$0	3 October
ABC Radio Darwin	Radio talk	\$645	4 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio talk	\$1,198	6 October
ABC Radio Darwin	Radio talk	\$201	7 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio interview	\$222	7 October
NT News	Article	\$348	11 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio interview	\$344	13 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio interview	\$1,004	24 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio interview	\$977	28 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	News report	\$146	28 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio interview	\$204	29 October
ABC Radio Alice Springs	Radio interview	\$234	31 October
Mix 104.9 Radio	Radio interview	\$1,019	31 October
NT Independent	Article	N/A	31 October

ASR total – \$6,542

Digital and statutory advertising

Digital advertising

The NTEC developed an advertisement which was placed on Google and YouTube for the lead up to and the duration of the voting period (20 – 29 October) with the following reach:

Type	Impressions	Clicks
YouTube advert	38,393	64
Google advert	329,313	100

Statutory advertising

The NTEC is required to place statutory advertisements throughout an election cycle. In the absence of an Alice Springs newspaper, the NTEC opted to place the Alice Springs Town Council by-elections statutory advertisements on the Alice Springs News website.

Type	Reach	Clicks	Timing
Statutory advert 1	40,910	15	7-14 October
Statutory advert 2	38,124	6	18-25 October
Statutory advert 3	35,000	-	25-29 October

Street banners

A 4 metre NTEC banner was placed on a council owned banner display on Larapinta Drive from approximately 19 – 30 October promoting awareness of the by-election.

Newsletter

The NTEC sent one newsletter specific to the Alice Springs Town Council by-election which provided an overview of all relevant topics of the by-election. This newsletter was sent to NTEC's email database of approximately 1,500 email addresses with the following reach:

Type	Opens %	Clicks %	Timing
Newsletter 1	37.4%	11.3%	20 October

Other public awareness activities

The NTEC hosted a stall at the Yeperenye Shopping Centre on Saturday 22 October 2022, to promote awareness of the by-election and that early voting had started that day.

A small DL sized flyer was developed which provided information about important dates, voting services (early voting, election day voting and urban mobile voting), the website link, and a map of the town council area to show who was required to vote. This flyer was distributed at the stall at the Yeperenye Centre, and in the centre's food court for the remainder of the voting period.

The flyer was also distributed to the Alice Springs Town Council to hand out and to all electorate offices for NT and federal members of parliament located in the town.

DONATIONS DISCLOSURE

Part 8.6 of the new *Local Government Act 2019* introduced new requirements for all candidates in local government general elections and by-elections to submit to the NTEC campaign donation returns covering a prescribed disclosure period. Disclosure and publication of campaign donation returns aims to provide greater transparency of the candidate funding of election campaigns.

Donation disclosure at the local government level in the Northern Territory means candidates are required to submit information about any donations or loans (whether cash or non-cash donations and loans) they receive for use in a local government general election or by-election. This information must be submitted to the NTEC within a legislated timeframe. The NTEC must then make this information available for public viewing by publishing the returns on its website, and having a hardcopy available in its office.

The campaign donation disclosure requirements for local government elections are much smaller and less complicated than those required for Legislative Assembly elections for example:

- only candidates are required to submit a campaign donation return
- only one campaign donation return is required (post-election)
- the return only needs to disclose donations/loans received over one disclosure period
- no return is required if donations/loans received do not meet the threshold.

These new financial disclosure requirements came into effect from 1 July 2022, and were therefore applied to the Alice Springs Town Council by-election.

The key dates of financial disclosure obligations for the by-election were:

Election day	29 October 2022
Disclosure period	1 July – 28 November 2022
Return due date	7 January 2023

There were no campaign donation returns received for the by-election.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) support

For any local government general election or by-election, an external contractor (F1 Solutions) is procured to provide specialist IT support for the electronic mark-off system (eLAPPS) used to mark off electors when they are issued a ballot paper. For the by-election, eLAPPS was used on 37 devices used to mark-off of electors, across 9 voting teams (as well as a number of spare devices). The eLAPPS system was also used for central monitoring of vote issuing during the voting period by NTEC staff in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Additional IT devices were also sent to Alice Springs loaded with the electoral roll as look up devices for electors who could not be found on the Alice Springs elector mark off list.

Significant ICT assistance is provided by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD) to the NTEC for most of the elections it conducts. For the Alice Springs Town Council by-election, DCDD provided ICT incident monitoring, response and escalation, as well as provision and management of IT event services including elevated support for the commission's election management system, eLAPPS services, Telstra services and the website, particularly with the timely publishing of count results.

Premises

Property Management Support Services within DCDD assisted the NTEC in leasing a temporary office space in Alice Springs which was staffed during the election period and used as the scrutiny centre for the conduct of counts.

As part of the SLA for the by-election, the Alice Springs Town Council provided its Andy McNeill Room at no cost as an early voting centre and an election day voting centre, and as a venue for 2 candidate information sessions, the declaration of nominations and the declaration of election results.

The NTEC office in Darwin was an early voting centre, for all postal voting coordination and as a scrutiny centre. The use of the commission's Darwin office is at no cost to the council.

A Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education covers the use of school facilities for NT elections under which facilities at Braitling Primary, Centralian Senior College and Gillen

Primary schools were hired as election day voting centres. The venue at Living Waters Lutheran School was hired under a private arrangement, as it is a non-government school.

The election day voting centre used at Blatherskite Park was leased through a general hire agreement. This was the first time the NTEC has used this venue and it is likely to be used again, however with more signage to assist electors.

Staffing

The day-to-day operations of the by-election were managed internally by the NTEC's permanent staff and was supplemented by casual staff identified from the commission's casual election staff database.

The table below shows the number of casual staff employed across a variety of positions. In total, 38 casual electoral positions were filled by 28 casual staff. In some instances, some casual staff were employed in more than one position.

Positions	No. of casual positions
Early voting centre staff	5
Election day voting centre staff	25
Urban mobile voting teams	2
Count staff	3
Other operations staff*	3

* e.g. postal voting, materials

Election costs

The tables below shows the final actual costs for the Alice Springs Town Council by-election, with the second table showing the costs for the processing of non-voters, as well as the revenue collected.

Expense category	Early voting centre	Election day voting centres	NTEC Operations	Postal voting	Urban mobile team	Total
Advertising			\$10,049			\$10,049
Destruction/rubbish removal			\$173			\$173
Information technology			\$9,423			\$9,423
Materials			\$3,699			\$3,699
Postage			\$2,000	\$2,932		\$4,932
Premises		\$4,063	\$2,273			\$6,336
Staff costs (includes travel, accommodation etc.)			\$13,137			\$13,137
Staff wages	\$13,786	\$21,185	\$21,184		\$3,015	\$59,170
Vehicle hire			\$3,342			\$3,342
Sub-total	\$13,786	\$25,248	\$65,280	\$2,932	\$3,015	\$110,261
Corporate overhead (15%)						\$16,539
Sub-total						\$126,800
GST 10%						\$12,680
					TOTAL	\$139,480

Non-voter costs

Expense	Total cost
Cost of first notice – printing, postage and envelopes	\$10,486
Cost of second notice – printing, postage and envelopes	\$8,333
Cost of returned mail (first and second notices)	\$2,596
Staff wages	\$2,400
SUB TOTAL	\$23,815
Corporate overhead (15%)	\$3,572
SUB TOTAL	\$27,387
GST (10%)	\$2,739
SUB TOTAL	\$30,126
Minus revenue	-\$18,225
	\$11,901

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