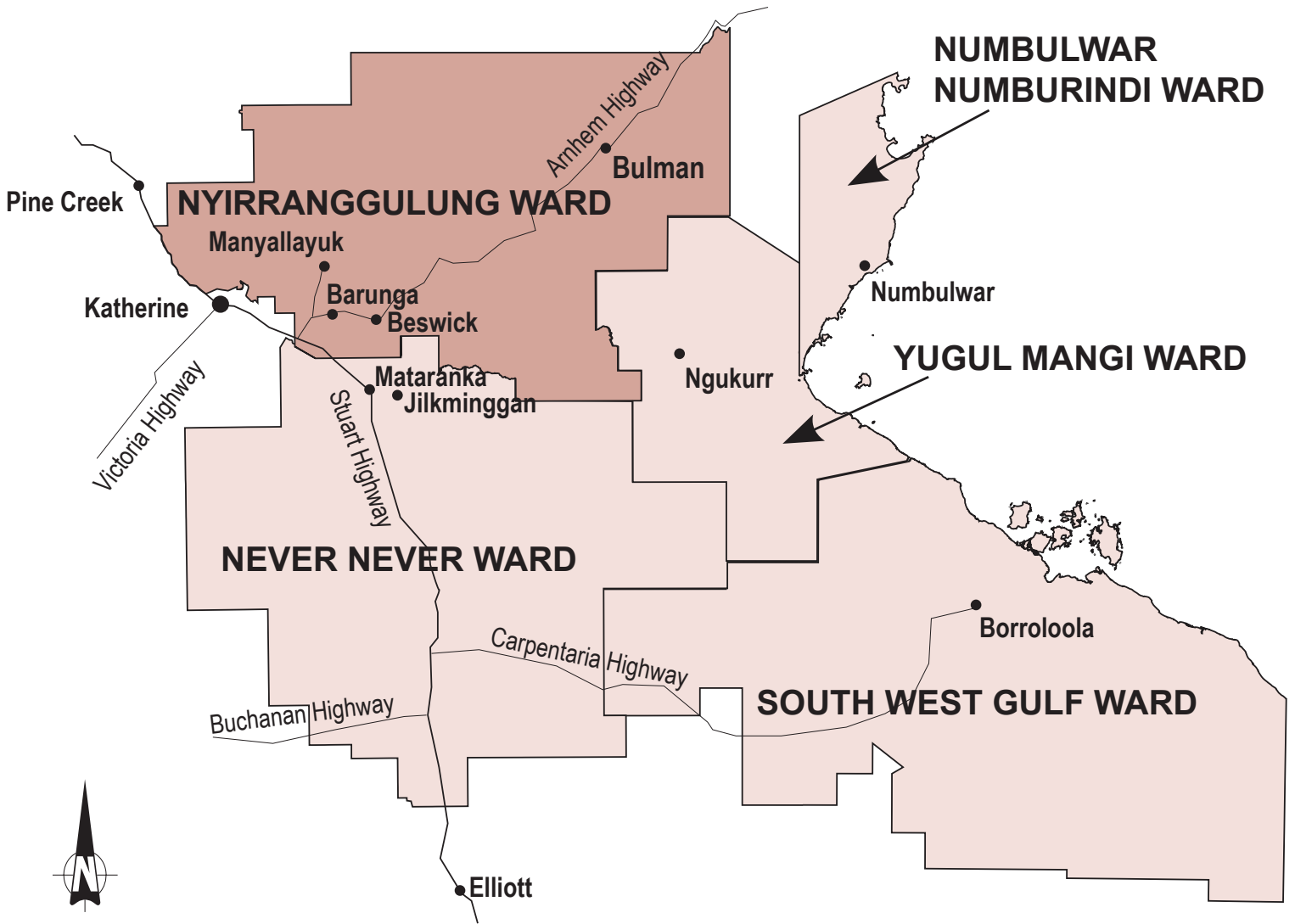




# 2018 ROPER GULF REGIONAL COUNCIL BY-ELECTION REPORT

## NYIRRUNGULUNG WARD





## Timetable

Date	Time	
Wednesday 29 August		Nominations open
Monday 3 September	5:00 pm	Electoral roll closes
Tuesday 4 September	12:00 noon	Nominations close
	1:00 pm	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Wednesday 5 September		Postal vote mail-out commences
	8:00 am	Early voting commences
Monday 17 September	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Tuesday 18 September	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Wednesday 19 September	5:00 pm	Early voting ceases
<b>Thursday 20 September</b>		<b>Election day</b>
	8:00 am	Election day voting commences
	3:30 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 24 September	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Tuesday 25 September	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Wednesday 26 September	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes
		Final counts of postal votes commence
		Distribution of preferences
Monday 1 October	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Election**

- The by-election for the 2018 Roper Gulf Regional Council (RGRC) Nyirranggulung ward was caused by a vacancy due to the resignation of a councillor; which took effect as at 3 July 2018. The by-election was conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act* Part 8.2.
- Ms Sharon Hillen, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the RGRC advised the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) in writing of the resignation in accordance with Section 39 (4) (d) (i) of the *Local Government Act*.
- The Commissioner of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) is the returning officer for local government elections, including by-elections.
- Susan Whyte was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the 2018 RGRC, Nyirranggulung ward by-election.
- An electronic mark-off system was used at all voting centres.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the RGRC and the NTEC was entered into on 1 August 2018. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and estimated costs.

### **Council**

Nyirranggulung is one of four wards contained within the Roper Gulf Regional Council area, and consists of three elected councillors.

As per the SLA it was agreed that the NTEC would take responsibility for remote, early and postal voting services for the by-election.

Roper Gulf Regional Council undertook/provided the following for the by-election:

- council owned voting premises at no cost
- a roll cleansing exercise
- Promotion of the election by displaying posters at the community service centres in the Nyirranggulung ward and via the council's social media site
- Visiting Officers' Quarters facilities at no cost where required/available.

In addition to the above, the council provided a community engagement team that visited the communities two weeks prior to the election; promoting the election and educating community members on how to vote. During the election, the community engagement team attended the larger remote voting stops with the NTEC team and provided assistance and promoted the election to community members.

It was reported by the NTEC remote voting team's, Office in Charge (OIC), that the two staff members of the community engagement team were exceptional and provided great assistance.

### **Boundary changes**

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

## ENROLMENT

An enrolment initiative, specific to RGRC Nyirranggulong ward, included an electoral roll cleansing project that commenced on 1 August 2018 and concluded on 24 August 2018. The project identified a number of electors that had left the ward, were duplicated on the roll or were deceased.

At the close of the electoral roll on Monday 3 September 2018, there was a total of 909 electors enrolled for Nyirranggulong ward; an increase of three electors from the 2017 NT Council elections.

An additional 49 enrolment forms were collected by the remote voting team throughout the election period.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

### Website

The Nyirranggulong ward by-election website was launched on Monday, 20 August and provided comprehensive information for candidates and voters. It also hosted a dedicated election results page and included details on vote counting, and showed all voting centre information.

### Advertising – print, radio, television

Statutory print advertising, providing relevant election information, was published in the Katherine Times.

### Council

Roper Gulf Regional Council undertook the role of notifying electors of the upcoming election by distributing relevant information sheets and posters that promoted nominations and voting via their community service centres.

## VOTING SERVICES

### Nominations

Nominations opened Wednesday 29 August 2018 and closed on Tuesday 4 September 2018 at 12:00 noon. There were a total of seven accepted nominations received.

The declaration of nominations was conducted at the Darwin NTEC office on Tuesday 4 September 2018 at 1:00 pm. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate.

### Summary of accepted nominations/candidates for Nyirranggulong ward

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Nyirranggulong ward councillor One vacancy	Preston LEE
	Deanna KENNEDY
	Mark DANIELS
	Esau MARTIN
	Mavis JUMBIRI
	Rachael KENDINO
	Freddie SCRUBBY

### Electronic voter mark-off

An electronic voter mark-off system was used for the by-election and records when someone has voted.

The voter mark-off system alleviates the necessity to have paper certified lists; therefore, improving efficiencies in voting centres.

### Early voting

Legislative changes in 2015 allows all electors the option to vote early without the need to meet any eligibility criteria. Early voting for this event was provided at the NTEC Darwin office and MyVote Central office in Alice Springs. Roper Gulf Regional Council was offered the option to provide an early voting service from Katherine, but declined the offer.

For future by-elections, early voting services in Katherine should be considered.

No early votes were taken for this election.

### Postal voting

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

There were 21 postal votes issued for Nyirranggulung ward with six accepted and admitted into the count.

### Election day voting centre

Election day was Thursday 20 September 2018. There were no election day voting centre for this election as all voting services were provided by a remote voting team.

### Remote voting

In consultation with the council it was determined that the remote voting team would conduct voting services at the following locations within the Nyirranggulung ward over a three day period.

### Number of votes issued

LOCATION	2018 by-election	2017 NT Council elections
Bulman	64	39
Weemol	4	13
Werenbun	4	5
Jodetluk	3	Did not poll
Manyallaluk	25	12
Beswick	73	102
Barunga	73	102
Early votes/absent/urban voting	0	66
Postal votes returned & admitted	6	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>Turnout</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>37.4%</b>

Turnout for the by-election was 27.7 per cent, which was a 10 per cent decrease in votes taken for the same ward in the 2017 NT Council elections. Seventeen electors provided excuses as to why they could not attend a voting centre, this included eight people attending a traditional meeting. Signage and posters were visible in the major communities, advising electors of the voting schedules and candidates.

## ELECTION

### Voting

The electoral system used in NT Local Government (Council) elections is the Proportional Representation electoral system; or PR for short:

- 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, divided by the number of vacancies, plus one.
- The candidates with votes equal to or greater than the quota are elected. If all vacancies are filled, the election is complete.
- If some vacancies remain unfilled, 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 day

Immediately after the close of voting at 3.30pm on election day, there was a count of first preference votes; conducted at the Barunga Council office scrutiny centre.

### Post-election scrutinies

Counting commenced at 9.00 am on Monday, 24 September 2018 at the Darwin NTEC office.

To be considered for the count, voters that applied for a postal vote were to complete their ballot papers and return them no later than 12:00 noon on Wednesday 26 September 2018. Six postal ballot papers were accepted and admitted to 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 Wednesday 26 September 2018.

Ward	Enrolment at 3 Sep 2018	Formal votes	Informal votes	Total
Nyirranggulung	909	239	13	<b>252</b>

### Election of one councillor – Nyirranggulung ward

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Preston LEE	62
Deanna KENNEDY	57
Mark DANIELS	4
Esau MARTIN	46
Mavis JUMBIRI	13
Rachael KENDINO	26
Freddie SCRUBBY	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>239</b>

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 120.

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

- Deanna Kennedy received the quota at count number six.

Deanna Kennedy was duly elected.

#### **Declaration of the results**

After the completion of the distribution of preferences, the election result and formal declaration documentation was sent to the Acting CEO, Roper Gulf Regional Council and the Minister for Housing and Community Development.

#### **Election costs**

The estimated cost for the Roper Gulf Regional Council – Nyirranggulung ward by-election was \$17,506.51 (GST included). The final cost associated with the election was \$15,680.38 (GST included); a saving of \$1,826.13.

The savings is attributed to reduced NTEC staffing expenses and the travel associated with the remote voting team.



## ISSUES OF NOTE

### Informal votes

- It was pleasing to see a very low level of informal voting; this can be attributed to advertising and posters addressing formality, and the education work the community engagement team provided to community members.

Election	Total informal votes	Unintentional informal votes	Intentional informal votes
2018 by-election	13	13	0
2017 NT Council elections	26	24	2

### Voter turnout

- Turnout for the by-election was 27.7 per cent, which was a 10 per cent decrease in votes taken for the same ward in the 2017 NT Council elections. Seventeen electors provided excuses as to why they could not attend a voting centre, this included eight people attending a traditional meeting.
- Remote voting team members noted the visibility of election awareness signage/posters in the major communities that informed electors of voting schedules and candidates; however, they did not see any election signage in the smaller communities like Weemol, Werenbun and Jodetluk. A total of only 11 votes, across these three smaller communities, were taken.
- In future elections, the following considerations may need to be applied to improve voter services and participation rates:
  - Improved election communication and awareness in the smaller communities of Weemol, Werenbun and Jodetluk to increase participation.
  - Replicate the education work, in all locations, the council community engagement team provided to community members.
  - Not provide voting services to the smaller communities.
  - Extend voting services in some of the larger communities, offering increased voting hours over multiple days.
  - Provide early voting services in Katherine.

### Candidate eligibility – Mr Preston Lee

- The eligibility criteria to stand as a candidate was challenged when the returning officer received information, after the close of nominations, stating that one of the candidates, Preston John Lee, was declared an undischarged bankrupt on 9 July 2018.
- Mr Lee had signed a declaration, which forms part of the nomination application, attesting to the fact that he met all of the eligibility criteria to stand as a candidate.
- The returning officer, wrote to Mr Lee on 21 September 2018, providing him with an opportunity to respond to the evidence received.
- Section 40 of the *NT Local Government Act*, enables the returning officer to refer an election result to the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal if there is any doubt that the candidate is ineligible to hold office. An application must be made within 21 days of the declaration of the election result.
- At the time of writing this report, Mr Lee had not responded to the returning officer's request to provide additional information.
- Mr Lee was not elected; therefore, no further action was taken.