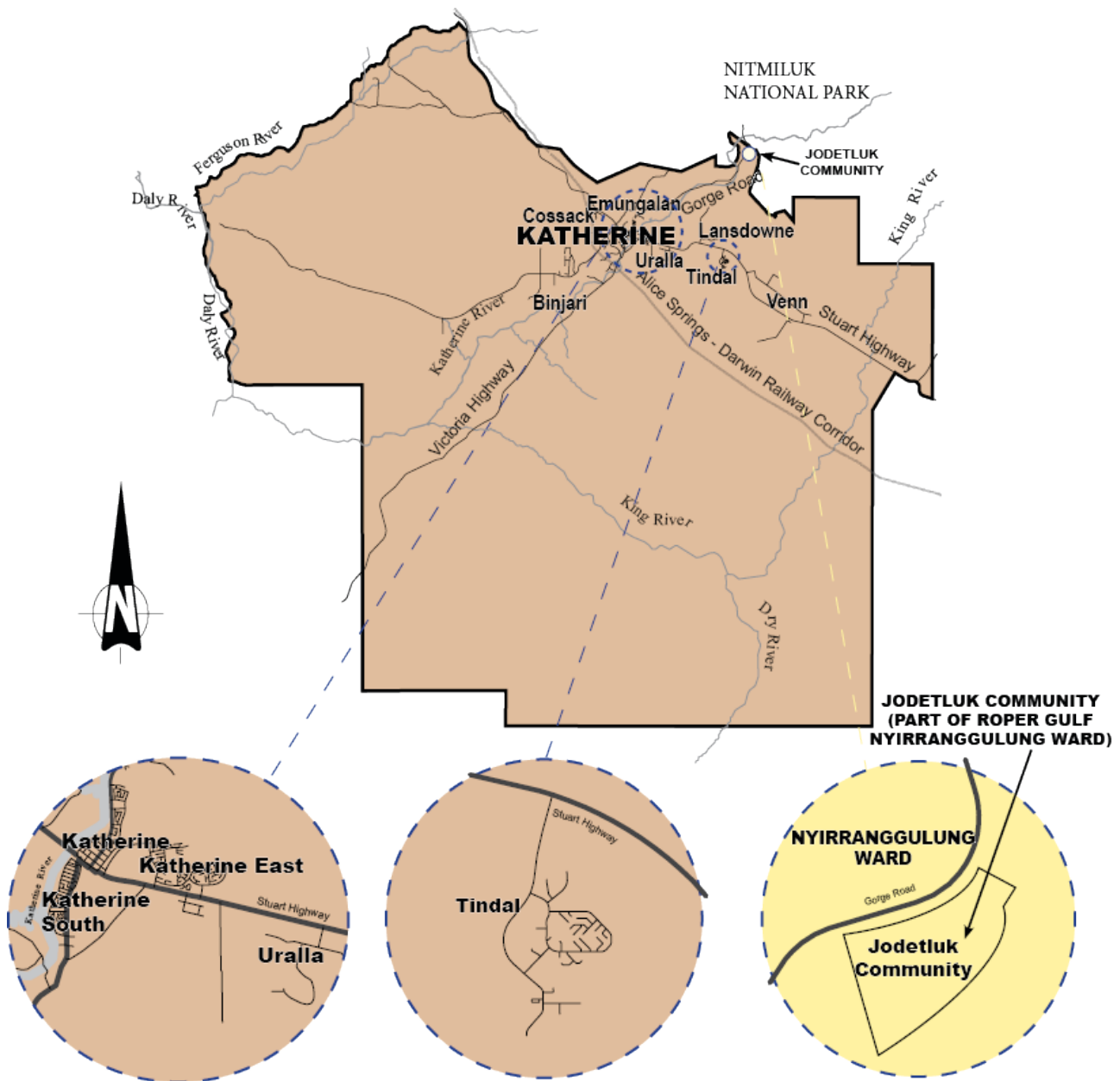




2017 NT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

KATHERINE TOWN COUNCIL ELECTION REPORT



Election timetable 2017 NT Council elections 26 August 2017

Date	Time	
Friday 14 July		Gazettal of date by Minister Nominations open
Tuesday 25 July	5:00 pm	Close of electoral roll
Thursday 3 August	12:00 noon	Close of nominations
Friday 4 August	12:00 noon	Declaration of nominations, draw for position on ballot papers
Monday 7 August		Postal vote mail-out commences
Monday 14 August	8:00 am	Early voting commences
	9:00 am	Mobile voting commences
Tuesday 22 August	6:00 pm	Overseas postal voting despatches cease
Thursday 24 August	6:00 pm	All postal voting despatches cease
Friday 25 August	6:00 pm	Early voting ceases
Saturday 26 August		Election day
	8:00 am	Election day voting commences
	6:00 pm	Election day voting ceases
		Mobile voting ceases
		Primary counts of ordinary, postal and early votes commence
		Primary counts of postal, mobile and early votes commence
Monday 28 August	9:00 am	Declaration vote verification checks, commence recheck of all counts
Thursday 31 August	9:00 am	Primary counts of accepted declaration votes, further postal counts
Friday 1 September	12:00 noon	Deadline for receipt of postal votes Final counts of postal votes commence Distribution of preferences
Monday 4 September	10:00 am	Declaration of the election result

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BACKGROUND

Election

- This is the second Local Government (LG) general election under section 85 of the *Local Government Act* (LGA). Amendments to the LGA deferred the election from March 2016 to August 2017. LG general elections are held 12 months after the Legislative Assembly (LA) elections.
- 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.
- Brian McKivat was appointed Deputy Returning Officer for the Katherine Town 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 in April 2017 and made available on the NTEC website.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Katherine Town Council and the NTEC was entered into on 28 March 2017. This outlined both organisations' roles, responsibilities, election services and costs.

Council

Katherine Town Council consists of one elected Mayor and six elected Aldermen.

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

- The council premises for use as a voting centre free-of-charge
- Promotion of the election through social media and council sites
- Promotion of the election by displaying relevant materials in the council foyer and displaying election banners throughout the town.

Boundary changes

There were no gazetted changes to the boundaries or the council ward structure from the 2015 review of electoral representation.

ENROLMENT

At the close of the electoral roll on Tuesday 25 July at 5:00 pm, there were a total of 5,630 electors enrolled for Katherine Town Council. This was an 11 per cent increase on the enrolment of 5,085 at the 2012 General elections.

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, NT News, Katherine Times 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 Katherine Town Council to assist in informing electors about the 2017 NT Council elections. Statutory print advertising providing specific voting information was published in the Katherine Times and NT News.

The Electoral Commissioner also promoted enrolment and the election participation through 39 interviews with Northern Territory media including ABC Darwin and Alice Springs, Channel Nine, Territory FM, MIX104.9, Aboriginal Broadcasting Network, CAAMA radio and the NT News.

Call centre

A call centre was established on Wednesday 2 August and ran until Monday 28 August. Staff assisted electors with a variety of election enquiries during this period.

Call centre enquiries

ENQUIRY TYPE	ENQUIRY NUMBERS
Total phone calls	3,254
Emails to ntec@nt.gov.au	1,379
Non-voter excuses lodged	615
Enrolment	694
Postal voting	462

Candidate information sessions

A candidate information session was conducted at the Katherine Town Council Civic Centre on 23 May 2017 with six participants attending.

In addition to the face-to-face information session, the NTEC in conjunction with LGANT, Dept. Housing and Community Development and the City of Palmerston, developed and produced a short YouTube video explaining the nomination process and candidate requirements relating to the election. This was available on the NTEC & LGANT websites.

Email and SMS

Email and SMS was used to contact 2,020 electors in Katherine whom provided these details on their enrolment form. Across the Northern Territory, 30,000 emails were sent advising electors about early and election-day voting centres. There were also SMSs with mobile voting information sent to 20 communities, with 1,607 SMSs sent to Katherine electors and four sent to Binjari electors.

VOTING SERVICES

Nominations

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

The declaration of nominations took place at the NTEC Darwin office on Friday 4 August. This event was attended by the general public, nominees, council representatives and the media. A random number generator selected the ballot paper position for each candidate.

Summary of accepted nominations/candidates for Katherine Town Council

POSITION	CANDIDATES IN BALLOT PAPER ORDER
Mayor (1 position)	Fay MILLER
	Kylee MCDUGALL
	Jon RAYNOR
	Allan BRENNAN
Alderman (6 positions)	Peter L F MCDUGALL
	Stephen Paul JAY
	John ZELLEY
	Peter GAZEY
	Toni Tapp COUTTS
	Dale William HILLEN
	Jon RAYNOR
	Steven ROSE
	Matthew James HURLEY
	Gill SWEENEY
	Shannon COUTTS
Elisabeth CLARK	

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 centre

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. Early voting services were provided at the Katherine Shopping Centre from 14 August to 25 August 2017 (including Saturday, 19 August). Votes for Katherine Town Council were also issued at other early voting centres across the Territory.

Votes issued at NT early voting centres for Katherine Town Council

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Alice Springs Council	5
Tennant Creek Civic Hall	5
Katherine Central Shopping Centre	2,039
Coolalinga Shopping Centre	5
Casuarina Library	18
Darwin CBD	15

Postal voting

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

There were 191 postal votes issued for Katherine Town Council. A total of 108 (57 per cent) were admitted to the count. A further 31 (16 per cent) were rejected and/or cancelled.

Postal votes admitted to the count are contained in a declaration envelope. There could be a slight difference in the numbers admitted to the count and the actual counted figure as there is no guarantee that the returned declaration envelope contained a ballot paper. Some electors who applied for a postal vote ultimately decided to vote in person.

Remote voting team

A remote voting team visited Binjari on Thursday 17 August between 8:45 am and 10:15 am. The voting team issued votes for Katherine Town Council only.

Votes issue on remote voting team

LOCATION	VOTES ISSUED
Binjari	53

Election day voting centres

Election day was Saturday 26 August with voting centres open from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm. On election day, voters had to vote within their council boundary. A total of 1,342 votes were issued for Katherine Town Council.

Votes issued at election day voting centres for Katherine Town Council

ELECTION DAY VOTING CENTRES	VOTES ISSUED
Katherine	671
Katherine East	442
Tindal	229

ELECTION

Voting

The voting system for local government elections is Proportional Representation (PR):

- Electors must number all the boxes on their ballot paper sequentially starting with the number one for their first choice.
- First preference votes for each candidate on formal ballot papers are counted, then a quota is calculated.
- The quota is the total number of formal ballot papers plus one, divided by the number of vacancies.
- The candidates with votes equal to or greater than the quota are elected. If all vacancies are filled, the election is complete.
- If not, preferences are distributed to the other candidates until all vacancies have been filled.

To learn more about the PR system, go to the [vote counting](#) page on the NTEC website.

Vote counting – election night

Vote counting began immediately after the close of voting at 6:00 pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2017. A count of first preference votes for Mayor and alderman was undertaken at each voting centre. First preference votes cast at early voting centres and remote voting teams were counted at the Darwin scrutiny centre.

Post-election night scrutinies

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

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

Voters that applied for a postal vote were expected to complete their ballot papers by 6:00 pm on election day, Saturday 26 August 2017. Postal ballot papers then had to be received by 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 Katherine Town Council

There were four candidates contesting the Mayor position and 12 candidates contesting six alderman positions. The successful candidates and first preference votes received are detailed in tables below.

Election of Mayor

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

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Faye MILLER	2,056
Kylee MCDUGALL	147
Jon RAYNOR	752
Allan BRENNAN	487
TOTAL	3,442

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 1,722.

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

- Faye Miller received the quota at count number 1

Fay Miller was duly elected.

Election of six aldermen

At the close of nominations there were 12 candidates. An election was duly held and the first preference votes were recorded as follows:

CANDIDATE	FIRST PREFERENCES
Peter L F MCDUGALL	127
Stephen Paul JAY	36
John ZELLEY	189
Peter GAZEY	547
Toni Tapp COUTTS	573
Dale William HILLEN	222
Jon RAYNOR	356
Steven ROSE	154
Matthew James HURLEY	296
Gill SWEENEY	228
Shannon COUTTS	186
Elisabeth CLARK	357
TOTAL	3,271

As a consequence, under the proportional representation voting system, the quota of votes required for this election was 468.

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

- Tony Tapp Coutts and Peter Gazey received the quota at count number 1
- Elisabeth Clark received the quota at count number 20
- Jon Raynor received the quota at count number 32
- Matthew James Hurley and John Zellely received the quota at count number 55.

Tony Tapp Coutts, Peter Gazey, Elisabeth Clark, Jon Raynor, Matthew James Hurley and John Zellely were duly elected.

Declaration of the election results

The results were declared at Katherine Town Council Civic Centre at 9:00 am on Monday 4 September 2017.

Declared election results for Katherine Town Council

MAYOR (1 vacancy)	ALDERMAN (6 vacancies)
Fay Miller	Toni Tapp Coutts Peter Gazey Elisabeth Clark Jon Raynor Matthew James Hurley John Zelley

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 Katherine Town Council to be \$87,503. Following the election, the costs are \$93,046 with a difference of \$5,543. This was attributed to additional costs associated to the hiring of the Katherine East Primary School as a voting centre and early voting centre OIC costs.

Summary of election costs

ELECTION AREA	COSTS
Public awareness	\$15,063
Staffing	\$33,844
Premises	\$4,700
Operational costs	\$39,439
TOTAL	\$93,046

ISSUES OF NOTE

Staffing

- As a result of the designated early voting centre OIC leaving Katherine, in consultation with council, it was determined that a replacement OIC from Darwin would be sought. This was undertaken after various options were canvassed, including identifying whether suitable staff could be used from council or the RAAF base. Facebook advertising was also undertaken, to no avail. This attributed to an additional \$3,500 to the estimate.
- All votes issued at the Katherine early voting centre were counted after 6:00pm on election night. Resources allocated to the task didn't take into account the large number of alderman candidates and the count took longer than anticipated. In the future, adequate resources will be identified to counteract this issue.

Complaints

- A complaint was received from a candidate regarding the inability to canvass for votes at the early voting centre located in the Katherine Shopping Centre. The EVC was located in a venue that was convenient to electors. The landlord does not permit political canvassing at the shopping centre. This EVC location is well supported by voters enrolled in the Katherine Town Council area.

Informality

- In the post-election phase, once the 21-day period for objections had expired, a survey of informal ballot papers for Katherine Town Council Mayor and Alderman was conducted.
- A total of 134 informal votes for Mayor and 302 for Alderman were identified. During the informality survey it was identified that 80 per cent of the total informal votes (436) were considered intentionally informal. The remaining 20 per cent were considered unintentionally informal.
- The number of unintentionally informal ballot papers could be attributed to the large number of candidates (12) where voters either duplicated numbers or missed the sequence. The NTEC attempted to assist voters in casting a formal vote by advising electors that all boxes must be numbered sequentially.

Non-voters

- Approximately 1,966 (35 per cent) of enrolled electors were identified as failing to vote in the 2017 NT Council elections for the Katherine Town Council.