

Agenda

Special Council Meeting

I hereby give notice that a Special Meeting of Council will be held on:

Date: Tuesday, 22 July 2025
Time: 5:30pm
Location: Council Chambers Darrandirra
Level 1, Civic Centre
Harry Chan Avenue, Darwin
Webcasting: [MS Teams Link to Webcast](#)

Simone Saunders

Chief Executive Officer



ORDINARY COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Right Worshipful, the Lord Mayor Kon Vatskalis (Chair)

Deputy Lord Mayor Morgan Rickard

Councillor Jimmy Bouhoris

Councillor Kim Farrar

Councillor Mirella Fejo

Councillor Sylvia Klonaris

Councillor Mick Palmer

Councillor Peter Pangquee

Councillor Vim Sharma

Councillor Ed Smelt

Councillor Amye Un

Councillor Rebecca Want de Rowe

Councillor Sam Weston

OFFICERS

Chief Executive Officer, Simone Saunders

General Manager Community, Matt Grassmayr

General Manager Corporate, Natalie Williamson

General Manager Innovation, Alice Percy

WEBCASTING DISCLAIMER

The City of Darwin is live webcasting the Open Section of Special Ordinary Council Meetings. Audio-visual recording equipment has been configured to avoid coverage of the public gallery area and the City of Darwin will use its best endeavours to ensure images in this area are not webcast. However the City of Darwin expressly provides no assurances to this effect and in the event your image is webcast, you will by remaining in the public gallery area be taken to have given the City of Darwin a non-exclusive licence to copy and broadcast your image worldwide for no reward.

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- 1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**
- 2 THE LORD’S PRAYER**
- 3 MEETING DECLARED OPEN**
- 4 APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**
 - 4.1 APOLOGIES**
 - 4.2 LEAVE OF ABSENCE GRANTED**
 - 4.3 LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUESTED**
- 5 ELECTRONIC MEETING ATTENDANCE**
 - 5.1 ELECTRONIC MEETING ATTENDANCE GRANTED**
 - 5.2 ELECTRONIC MEETING ATTENDANCE REQUESTED**
- 6 DECLARATION OF INTEREST OF MEMBERS AND STAFF**
- 7 MOVING OF ITEMS**
- 8 DEPUTATIONS AND BRIEFINGS**

Nil

9 ACTION REPORTS

9.1 2025 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION SERVICE AGREEMENT BUDGET VARIATION

Author: A/Manager Office of Council and CEO

Authoriser: Chief Executive Officer

Attachments:

1. 2025 Electoral Service Agreement [↓](#)
2. Annex 1 - City of Darwin 2025 Local Government Election Service Agreement [↓](#)
3. Incoming Correspondence - Northern Territory Electoral Commission - Costs and Voting Centre [↓](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT the report entitled 2025 Local Government Election Service Agreement Budget Variation be received and noted.
2. THAT Council approve the increase of the total budget for the Electoral Service Agreement with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission for the August 2025 Local Government Elections to \$720,000.
3. THAT Council approve \$250,000 to be carried forward from 2024/25 general fund savings to the Elections Reserve to fund the increase in budget in 2025/26.
4. THAT Council approve for the Chief Executive Officer to execute the contract with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission for the 2025 Local Government Elections per **Attachment 1** and **Attachment 2**.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council on the status of the Electoral Service Agreement for the August 2025 Local Government Elections and to obtain Council's approval to increase the allocated budget.

KEY ISSUES

- On Tuesday, 17 June 2025, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission provided a copy of the Electoral Service Agreement with an estimated cost summary of \$667,221.94 (excluding GST).
- On Tuesday, 15 July 2025, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission provided further correspondence on the election cost estimate with a further increase in costs to \$719,955.48 (excluding GST).
- On review of the Electoral Service Agreement a budget increase is required for City of Darwin to proceed in the 2025 Local Government Elections.
- The approved budget allocated for the municipal election is currently \$470,000.

DISCUSSION

On Thursday, 15 May 2025, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission announced the August 2025 Local Government Elections.

Council must undertake an election process for the vacant elected member positions to ensure legislated deadlines are met.

The Returning Officer for a general election, including nomination of candidates and other related processes is to be conducted by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Key Dates and Voting Centres

The date for the 2025 Local Government Election is Saturday, 23 August 2025.

The declaration of results is on Monday, 8 September 2025.

Voting is compulsory in municipal elections.

The provision of early voting will run for two weeks prior to election day commencing on Monday, 11 August 2025.

There will be two early voting centres; one located at the Darwin Entertainment Centre, and one located at the Casuarina Library. These locations are both owned by City of Darwin to ensure venue hire costs are kept to a minimum.

There are four Election Day voting centres located at the Darwin Entertainment Centre, the Casuarina Library, Sanderson Middle School and Nightcliff Middle School.

Visitation to correctional facilities, hospitals and aged care facilities will be conducted by Northern Territory Electoral Commission personnel.

Electoral Service Agreement

On Tuesday, 11 March 2025, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission provided a copy of the Electoral Service Agreement August 2025 Local Government Elections with an estimated cost summary of \$692,556.22 (excluding GST).

City of Darwin Officers have had several discussions with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission addressing the significant increase in pricing from the 2021 General Elections. The key items of concern were cost estimates provided for:

- Advertising of \$100,232.91 (increased recently from \$50,798.12)
- Labour costs, wages, travel and accommodation of \$490,828.55

A comparison of charges for the last two general elections and by-elections are provided below.

	2017 General Election	2021 General Election	2022 By-election Waters Ward	2023 By-election Lyons Ward
Estimated Amount	\$445,915.62*	\$526,128.71*	\$114,425.39*	\$87,625.69*
Actual Amount	\$405,568.80*	\$572,867.26*	\$92,256.83*	\$81,510.39*
Amount Paid	\$405,568.80*	\$491,515.84*	\$92,256.83*	\$81,510.39*

**All amounts are excluding GST.*

Other Councils, LGANT and City of Darwin Officers have raised concerns regarding the significant estimated costs for the upcoming Local Government Elections. Concerns were also raised by the Top End Regional Organisations of Council (TOPROC) who then wrote to the Northern Territory Government expressing these concerns and the rates increases that were required to cover these additional costs.

On Tuesday, 15 July 2025, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission provided an amended estimate to City of Darwin on the election cost estimate for the 2025 Local Government Election with a further increase in costs to \$719,955.48 (excluding GST).

A breakdown of the final estimated cost summary is provided below. Further correspondence has been received from the Northern Territory Electoral Commission at **Attachment 3**, providing more detailed information on voting centres and cost estimates breakdowns.

Expense category	total
Advertising	\$100,323.91
Corporate	\$2,609.40
Destruction/rubbish removal	\$2,288.33
Information technology	\$36,605.21
Materials	\$45,112.15
Postage	\$27,914.90
Premises	\$12,804.96
Staff travel/accommodation/reimbursements	\$42,954.81
Staff wages	\$434,846.64
Vehicle hire/charter	\$14,094.49
Sub-total	\$719,554.79
GST (10%)	\$71,955.48
Total	\$791,510.26

Salaries Breakdown

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission has provided the following split of the salary and wages \$42,954.81 plus \$434,846.64, being \$477,801.44 is per below:

Finance - LG GE council - Estimates by category and type per council - Darwin

2025 Local Government Elections

Expense category	Task	Early Voting Centre	Election Day Voting Centre	NTEC Operations	NTEC Public Awareness	Postal Voting Centre	le Team (Hourly Rate)	Voting Area Manager	Total
Travel/Accom/Reimb	Accommodation			\$25,735.16					\$25,735.16
Travel/Accom/Reimb	Fares			\$2,935.57					\$2,935.57
Travel/Accom/Reimb	Living Away from Home Allowance			\$12,232.29					\$12,232.29
Travel/Accom/Reimb	Travel allowance (total package)			\$2,051.79					\$2,051.79
Staff wages	Ballot paper manager			\$9,402.64					\$9,402.64
Staff wages	Dec Scrutiny			\$2,887.56					\$2,887.56
Staff wages	Deputy Regional Area Coordinator			\$11,195.25					\$11,195.25
Staff wages	Easy Count Manager			\$6,220.81					\$6,220.81
Staff wages	eLAPPS			\$18,094.55					\$18,094.55
Staff wages	electoral allowance			\$10,763.76					\$10,763.76
Staff wages	Electoral Project Officer			\$9,028.80					\$9,028.80
Staff wages	EVC Support officer			\$3,317.66					\$3,317.66
Staff wages	General Staff Wages	\$54,146.82		\$11,373.74			\$5,817.53		\$71,338.08
Staff wages	General Staff Wages	\$14,849.70		\$34,085.23	\$14,351.67		\$497.52		\$63,784.12
Staff wages	General Staff Wages	\$52.60		\$0.00					\$52.60
Staff wages	materials			\$28,796.62					\$28,796.62
Staff wages	Materials - Logistics Operations			\$30,368.33					\$30,368.33
Staff wages	NTEC higher duties			\$5,023.09					\$5,023.09
Staff wages	Office Admin Support			\$7,427.17					\$7,427.17
Staff wages	Operations Office Casual - REMOTE			\$15,373.37					\$15,373.37
Staff wages	Operations Office Casual - URBAN			\$27,426.77					\$27,426.77
Staff wages	PA - Call Centre				\$38,854.04				\$38,854.04
Staff wages	PA - Expos & info stands				\$6,280.41				\$6,280.41
Staff wages	Package payments		\$18,097.81					\$1,957.42	\$20,055.23
Staff wages	Package training		\$4,501.88					\$806.00	\$5,307.88
Staff wages	Regional Area Coordinator			\$11,625.88					\$11,625.88
Staff wages	Results			\$259.88					\$259.88
Staff wages	Scrutiny Manager (Count)			\$6,220.81					\$6,220.81
Staff wages	Super/payroll tax	\$20,714.72	\$3,389.96	\$203.82	\$71.06		\$947.26	\$414.52	\$25,741.34
Sub-total		\$89,763.84	\$25,989.65	\$292,050.53	\$59,557.18	\$0.00	\$7,262.31	\$3,177.94	\$477,801.44
GST		10.0%							\$47,780.14
Total									\$525,581.59

The Northern Territory Electoral Commission has provided the following commentary on the cost allocations:

There is a complex methodology that is used by the Election Management System to ensure appropriate staffing levels to electors. The methodology takes into account;

- the number of electors (in the City of Darwin's case more than 52,000 electors);*
- the number of voting centres (in City of Darwin's case the number has been reduced hence modelling takes into account additional staff members to service electors in less voting centres);*
- previous elector patterns and behaviour (percentage of early voting compared to election day voting); and*
- the percentage of electors who vote outside of their local government areas.*

Perhaps what can be confusing, is that many councils' direct contact with election service delivery is for the early voting and election day service only.

However, the election itself is a four-month exercise, within a twelve to eighteen month planning and implementation phase.

As a broad outline, costs related to councils can be described as follows:

Month	Item	Description
May/June	Call Centre Postal Voting Applications Premises Establishment Logistics and Materials Establishment	Call Centre Manager establishes systems and processes. Postal vote applications open during this period. IT hardware, licences established; count/scrutiny centre established; etc
July	Nominations Open Election Operations Planning and Implementation Phase	Call centre casual staff come on board Subject Matter Experts come on board
August	Declaration of Nominations Postal Voting Commences Early Voting Commences Election Day Voting Services Vote counting commences (2 weeks)	Counting commences after 6.00pm on Election Day at voting centres and the Scrutiny Centre. During the following two weeks there will be fresh counts, recounts, processing of declaration votes with the AEC and receipt and counting of postal votes that close 5 September 2025, with final declaration on 8 September 2025. All 54 elections are counted. If a council ward is uncontested or fails, this results in less counts being required and therefore impacts on the number of staff who are working in the count centre.
September September /October	Declaration of Results Election Reports Preparation	8 September 2025

The City of Darwin staffing estimates include apportioned costs for personnel working at Call Centre, public awareness activities (show circuit for example), postal voting, early and election day voting, counting teams and count centre and mobile voting services.

Regarding City of Darwin, we outlined in previous correspondence the number and type of voting centres in the municipality of Darwin. City of Darwin will attract both direct and apportioned costs for team members who will fulfil the following roles:

Early Voting Centres (x 2)

- EVC Manager
- EVC Deputy Manager
- Casual staff members

Election Day Voting Centre Positions (4 EDVC)

- *EDVC Manager*
- *EDVC Deputy Manager*
- *EDVC Declaration Vote issuing officers*
- *Casual Staff Members*

Budget Funding

In accordance with section 204 of the *Local Government Act 2019* Council cannot allocate money unless provision for the allocation is made in the budget for the relevant year. The 2025/26 budget allocation for the election expense is currently \$470,000, requiring additional funding of \$250,000 to be identified prior to execution of the Electoral Service Agreement.

It is proposed that the shortfall is funded through the 2024/25 to 2025/26 Carry Forward Budget process where \$250,000 has been identified as savings to be transferred to the Election Expense Reserve. Although the ending budget surplus position is not finalised, sufficient general fund savings has been identified through a combination of underspend within Elected Members Allowances and interest income exceeding targets.

Officers recommend the budget variation be supported.

Pre-Election Campaigning and Candidate Information Table

In previous Local Government Elections including By-elections Council decided that for early voting centre venues owned by City of Darwin Council, it was determined that during the early voting period only, campaigning will not be permitted, however a table will be located at each centre to allow campaign material to be available for electors. Please note that the table was managed by NTEC in prior elections.

As the early voting centres for this Local Government Election are owned by City of Darwin, **Attachment 2** has been drafted by officers per prior Council decision and elections where campaigning will not be permitted at early voting centres. However, a table could be located at each centre to allow campaign material, just for the Darwin Municipality, to be available for electors. Noting that these tables will need to be managed by City of Darwin officers at resource time and cost.

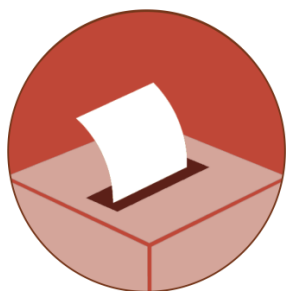
Furthermore, campaigning will be permitted on Election Day voting at all voting centres.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Nil

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT	6 Governance Framework 6.3 Decision Making and Management
BUDGET / FINANCIAL / RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Budget/Funding: Approximately \$250,000 Is Funding identified: Yes Existing Position No: Nil Contractor: Northern Territory Electoral Commission
LEGISLATION / POLICY CONTROLS OR IMPACTS	Legislation: <i>Local Government Act 2019</i> <i>Local Government Regulations</i> Policy: Nil

CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION	Engagement Level: Inform Tactics: Nil Internal: Chief Executive Officer General Managers Executive Manager Finance External: Northern Territory Electoral Commission
DECLARATION OF INTEREST	The report author does not have a conflict of interest in relation to this matter. The report authoriser does not have a conflict of interest in relation to this matter. If a conflict of interest exists, staff will not act in the matter, except as authorised by the CEO or Council (as the case requires).



Northern Territory
Electoral Commission
EVERY vote counts!

ELECTORAL SERVICE AGREEMENT

Between Northern Territory Electoral Commission
and City of Darwin

Term 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

Date prepared: 17 June 2025
Prepared by: A Malgorzewicz

DOCUMENT HISTORY AND VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Brief description
1.0	17 June 2025	A Malgorzewicz	Final Draft
1.1	17 July 2025	A Malgorzewicz	Amended Final Draft
2.0			

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1. Introduction

The *Local Government Act 2019* (**LG Act**) governs the electoral events of the Northern Territory's 18 local councils, including general elections and by-elections. These events are clarified or guided by further legislative instruments under the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021 (**electoral regulations**).

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** is responsible for the conduct of local government general elections and may be the returning officer for the conduct of local government by-elections.

1.1. *Purpose and scope*

This Electoral Service Agreement establishes the costing program for the preparation and conduct of the general election for **City of Darwin** as part of the 2025 Local Government Elections.

The functions and responsibilities of the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** in relation to local government electoral events are prescribed in the **electoral regulations** and the **LG Act**. This Electoral Service Agreement does not procure the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** as a contractor to **City of Darwin** but instead recognises the parties' mutual interest in the preparation and conduct of the election required by **City of Darwin** under the **LG Act**.

1.2. *The parties*

The provider of the electoral service is:

Northern Territory Electoral Commission

Level 3, 80 Mitchell Street
Darwin NT 0800

ABN 84 085 734 992

Contact: Susan Whyte

The client for the electoral service is:

City of Darwin

GPO Box 84
Darwin NT 0801

ABN 11 503 313 301

Contact: Jane Bland

2. Description of services provided

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will apply the requirements of the **LG Act** and **electoral regulations**, conduct, in respect to the 2025 general election for **City of Darwin**. Schedules 1 and 2 of this Electoral Service Agreement detail the relevant services.

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will provide practical and reasonable assistance to the **City of Darwin** during the performance of services under this Electoral Service Agreement. Practical and reasonable assistance includes, but is not limited to, providing access to premises, information, and resources that are administered, owned, or organised by the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission**.

City of Darwin will provide practical and reasonable assistance to the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** during the performance of services under this Electoral Service Agreement. Practical and reasonable assistance includes, but is not limited to, providing access to premises, information, and resources that are administered, owned, or organised by **City of Darwin**.

3. Term and variations of Electoral Service Agreement

This Electoral Service Agreement will be in place for electoral services occurring within the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

3.1. Changes to applicable legislation

This Electoral Service Agreement and the electoral services discussed within it may be amended, revoked, or varied, as may be the case, to ensure currency and compliance with applicable legislation, including—but not limited to—the **LG Act**, and the **electoral regulations**, or other Acts.

3.2. Changes to procedures

In consultation and agreement with the council, the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** may from time to time vary its procedures involved with the performance of electoral services, whether or not the procedure is described in this Electoral Service Agreement. Procedural changes may impact on the availability, performance, or cost of electoral services.

A procedural variation may result from an administrative or system improvement or fault, a change to accepted electoral practice, an initiative implemented or ceased by the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission**, or as a result of location or logistical improvements or faults, or in responding to an electoral concern encountered at an election.

4. Raising a dispute

If a dispute arises between the parties, the party claiming the dispute must give the other party written notice setting out details of the dispute. Written notice of a dispute may be foreshadowed during face to face or telephone discussions between authorised representatives of the other party. Unless agreed to the contrary, written notice must provide a period for the other party to resolve the dispute of not less than 14 days.

5. Electoral service delivery

5.1. *Quality control*

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will establish and maintain robust quality standards in the performance of its electoral services and the minimum service standards to be applied at the general elections are detailed in Appendix 1. The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will ensure that appropriate response plans are in place for any quality issues that arise and will make all reasonable efforts to inform the authorised representative of the **City of Darwin** should an issue of serious concern arise.

5.2. *Continuous improvement*

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will establish and maintain an ongoing cycle of review to identify opportunities for improvement in its electoral services and to ensure these services continue to comply with good electoral practice and provide efficient and cost effective solutions for the Northern Territory local government sector.

5.3. *Third party providers*

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will establish and maintain suitable arrangements with third party providers (i.e. aircraft charter, vehicle hire and printers) that ensure accountable, effective, and efficient performance, practices, and issue response. The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will seek and maintain cost effective solutions from third party providers where those costs are passed on to **City of Darwin**.

6. Service pricing

6.1. *Invoicing*

For the duration of this Electoral Service Agreement, the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will operate a costing framework that applies charges relevant to this electoral event. Charges include direct costs to council and costs apportioned across all councils based on enrolment numbers. Schedule 2 provides further details of direct and apportioned costs.

The costing arrangements for electoral services provided under this Electoral Service Agreement are detailed in a cost summary and service summary provided at Schedule 1.

Potential cost variables are also listed. An estimated cost of electoral services is provided at Schedule 2.

Unless notified to the contrary, the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will invoice within the scope of the variations and/or qualifications included with the estimate of costs for the electoral event. The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will provide timely invoices for electoral services provided under this Electoral Service Agreement. Cost variations will be applied on the invoice and/or reconciled with the invoice.

6.2. Payment

Upon receipt of a tax invoice from the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** for electoral services provided under this Electoral Service Agreement, the **City of Darwin** will make full payment of the invoice in accordance with the terms provided on that invoice (or otherwise specified by or agreed with the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission**).

Withholding payment of an invoice is not notice of **City of Darwin** intention to dispute an invoice (see clause 4).

6.3 GST

Unless otherwise expressly stated, all amounts payable under this agreement are expressed to be exclusive of GST. If GST is payable on a supply made under or in connection with this Agreement, for which the consideration is not expressly stated to be GST inclusive, the party providing the consideration for that supply must pay to the supplier as additional consideration an amount equal to the amount of GST payable on that supply (the 'GST amount').

The GST amount is payable at the same time that the other consideration for the supply is provided, except that the GST amount need not be paid until the supplier gives a tax invoice to the recipient of the supply.

7. Indemnity and insurances

Except with respect to claims arising from a party's separate negligence or wilful acts, which shall remain that party's obligation, each party agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless the other party and its directors, officers, contractors, agents, and employees with respect to a claim arising from the party's actual or alleged act, failure to act, error, or omission in the performance of their obligations under this Electoral Service Agreement or any governing law or regulation.

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** must maintain any insurances necessary for the performance of its functions under the **LG Act** and any other Act, and for the delivery of all electoral services provided under this Electoral Service Agreement.

8. Execution

Executed as an Electoral Service Agreement:

8.1. For the Northern Territory Electoral Commission

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name: _____

Position: _____

Witnessed by,

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name: _____

Position: _____

8.2. For City of Darwin

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name: _____

Position: _____

Witnessed by,

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name: _____

Position: _____

Schedule 1: Service and cost summaries

Service summary

The **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will conduct the election in accordance with the requirements outlined in the **LG Act** and **electoral regulations**.

In addition to these provisions, the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** will provide the following agreed activities:

- provide postal voting, early voting, mobile voting and election day voting services as applicable
- a Service Plan that provides details of voting services and election processes
- engage, authorise and train all election staff
- provide all voting centre election materials including cardboard voting equipment
- provide devices with electronic electoral rolls for voter mark-off
- procure ballot papers and other associated printed products
- conduct a multi channel public awareness campaign that includes educational materials in local languages and community engagement activities
- provide an dedicated website with election information and updated results
- provide a service centre (call centre)
- declare nominations and results as per the election timetable in Darwin with access for all councils via MS Teams
- conduct all counts and provide count software
- undertake non-voter processes post-election as applicable
- hold regular meetings with each council during the election period
- arrange a post event de-brief with each council
- prepare and publish election reports for each council and a 2025 Local Government Elections report.

City of Darwin will support the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** in the conduct of the election by providing the following:

- a candidate information session
- support for the nomination process by assisting candidates to complete and upload their nomination via the NTEC website
- promote the election via council social media outlets including publishing public notices
- provide banner space and install banners on council signage at no cost (where possible)
- provide council premises as voting centres for early voting, remote voting and election day voting services at no cost
- facilitate the safe and secure storage of live ballot papers, netbook devices (for electronic mark-off) and election materials
- provide office space for NTEC staff if required

- provide council owned accommodation (if required) in communities at no cost
- participate in regular meetings during the election period
- participate in post event de-brief.

Cost summary

The reasonable costs and expenses of conducting an election are payable by the council (**electoral regulation 87(1)**). These reasonable costs and expenses are detailed in this agreement.

Based on the costing scenario listed below, the **Northern Territory Electoral Commission** has estimated the cost of the service at **\$667,221.94** (excluding GST).

This cost estimate does not include any estimate of costs of non-voter processes nor estimated revenue from the payment of associated infringement notices. The decision to pursue non-voters is at the discretion of the Electoral Commissioner (**electoral regulation 79**).

This is an estimate only and is prepared using a costing scenario. It is not a fixed price and is therefore subject to change. The list of qualifications and prescribed variations (below) will be applied for invoicing. **City of Darwin** will be advised of any known and significant cost variations that may impact the final election service delivery cost.

The **City of Darwin** will pay the full cost in the 2025-26 financial year.

Cost variables

These are unknown activities that may have an impact on the final costs:

- wards are uncontested or a failed election
- ability for the council to off-set election costs with council resources
- estimated enrolment and turnout rates
- number of overseas postal vote applications
- unanticipated rate changes with existing suppliers
- NTEC staff overtime
- size and length of the counting operation
- responses to public health advice or directions.

Schedule 2: Cost estimate

Finance - LG GE council - Estimates by category per council - Darwin				
2025 Local Government Elections				
Expense category				Total
Advertising				\$100,323.91
Corporate				\$2,609.40
Destruction/rubbish removal				\$2,288.33
Information technology				\$36,605.21
Materials				\$45,112.15
Postage				\$27,914.90
Premises				\$12,804.96
Staff travel/accommodation/reimbursements				\$42,954.81
Staff wages				\$434,846.64
Vehicle hire/charter				\$14,094.49
Sub-total				\$719,554.79
GST	10.0%			\$71,955.48
Total				\$791,510.26

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	2017 Enrolment	2021 Enrolment	2025 Enrolment*	% of Total
Alice Springs Town Council	14,357	15,756	17,075	11.7
Barkly Regional Council	4,264	4,072		
Belyuen Community Government Council	144	138	168	0.1
Central Desert Regional Council	2,657	2,474	2,709	1.9
Coomalie Community Government Council	614	631	746	0.5
City of Darwin	50,100	51,060	52,092	35.8
East Arnhem Regional Council	5,876	6,170	6,492	4.5
Groote Archipelago Regional Council				
Katherine Town Council	5,630	6,321	6,887	4.7
Litchfield Council	12,268	12,374	14,035	9.7
MacDonnell Regional Council	3,615	3,541	3,975	2.7
Palmerston, City of	21,261	23,559	26,081	17.9
Roper Gulf Regional Council	3,952	3,902	4,442	3.1
Tiwi Islands Regional Council	1,636	1,650	1,810	1.2
Victoria Daly Regional Council	1,713	1,712	1,884	1.3
Wagait Shire Council	311	299	346	0.2
West Arnhem Regional Council	3,720	3,578	4,387	3.0
West Daly Regional Council	1,796	1,686	2,262	1.6
Total enrolment for NT councils	133,914	138,923	145,391	100.0
* 2025 Enrolment as at 31 May 2025.				

Annex 1 – 2025 Local Government Election Service Agreement.

Voting centre type and location	Opening times
Casuarina Early Voting Centre Casuarina Library 17 Bradshaw Terrace Casuarina	Monday, 11 August to Friday, 15 August 2025 8:00am to 5:00pm Saturday, 16 August 2025 8:00am to 3:00pm Monday, 18 August to Thursday, 21 August 2025 8:00am to 5:00pm Friday, 22 August 2025 8:00am to 6:00pm No campaigning – pamphlet holder provided
Darwin Early Voting Centre Darwin Entertainment Centre 93 Mitchell Street Darwin	Monday, 11 August to Friday, 15 August 2025 8:00am to 5:00pm Saturday, 16 August 2025 8:00am to 3:00pm Monday, 18 August to Thursday, 21 August 2025 8:00am to 5:00pm Friday, 22 August 2025 8:00am to 6:00pm No campaigning – pamphlet holder provided
Election Day Voting Centres Casuarina Library 17 Bradshaw Terrace Casuarina Darwin Entertainment Centre 93 Mitchell Street Darwin Sanderson Middle School 60 Matthews Road Malak Nightcliff Middle School 90 Aralia Street Nightcliff	Saturday, 23 August 2025 8:00am to 6:00pm Campaigning permitted



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Simone Saunders
Chief Executive Officer
City of Darwin

Delivered via email: simone.saunders@darwi.nt.gov.au

Dear Simone

RE: 2025 Local Government Elections – Response to questions re voting centres and costs

Thank you for meeting with myself and the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Anna Malgorzewicz following your emailed enquiry regarding voting centres and cost estimate breakdowns. As agreed, I am providing you with the requested information for inclusion in your advice to Council.

Voting Centres and Campaigning

Following our initial meeting in February 2025, NTEC operational staff members in consultation with City of Darwin officers, reduced the number of early and election day voting centres at your request. To confirm, the following venues will operate as Early Voting Centres in the municipality of Darwin.

Casuarina Library, 17 Bradshaw Terrace, Casuarina; and

Darwin Entertainment Centre, 93 Mitchell Street, Darwin.

These premises will operate at the following times;

Monday 11 August – Friday 15 August 2025	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday 16 August 2025	8:00 am – 3:00 pm
Monday 18 August – Thursday 21 August 2025	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Friday 22 August 2025	8:00 am – 6:00 pm

All early voting centres will have ballot papers for each of the council elections and will also become election day voting centres and will have ballot papers for every council election.

Election Day voting centres in the municipality of Darwin will include;

Casuarina Library, 17 Bradshaw Terrace, Casuarina;

Darwin Entertainment Centre, 93 Mitchell Street, Darwin;

Sanderson Middle School, 60 Matthews Road, Malak; and

Nightcliff Middle School, 90 Aralia Street, Nightcliff.

Election Day voting centres will open from 8.00am – 6.00pm and will issue ballot papers for the City of Darwin only.

Urban voting services for urban locations will also be provided at Berrimah Correctional Centre, Darwin Correctional Centre, Darwin Private Hospital, Palmerston Hospital and Royal Darwin Hospital.

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The NTEC must conduct the local government election in compliance with legislative and regulatory frameworks. The *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021* provides for the following:

77 Conduct at voting centre

- (1) A person commits an offence if the person intentionally canvasses for votes in, or within 10 metres of the entrance to, a voting centre while the voting centre is open for voting.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

As a result the NTEC will regulate to ensure campaign materials are not permitted within 10 metres of the entrance to the voting centres during voting hours, at both early and election day voting centres. Provisions to manage what occurs outside the 10 metre zone is at the discretion of the landowner and any relevant polices or by-laws that may be in effect to control activities in the area.

The NTEC does not provide pamphlet holders, display tables or any infrastructure outside the 10 metre zone for campaign materials. The NTEC enforces the appropriate authorisation of campaign materials only.

To clarify, the NTEC's role is to ensure the compliant conduct of elections and to facilitate awareness and access for electors to participate in the election event. It is not the NTEC's role to facilitate candidate campaign activities. The NTEC encourages all candidates to provide links to social media accounts or other relevant platforms as part of the nomination process. Links to these sites are provided for in the candidate listing on the NTEC website where a candidate has provided express permission for these to be published by the NTEC. The use of social media and other platforms is discretionary.

Comprehensive information resources regarding campaign materials and campaigning are available at the NTEC website at the following link: [Candidate information | NTEC](#)

Public Awareness Budget

The NTEC has identified a total budget allocation of \$343,000 for public awareness and statutory advertising activities. In the original correspondence to all councils in December 2024, this figure was quoted as \$350,000 in the factsheets that were disseminated at the time. The budget has been allocated along the following categories:

Category	Breakdown	Amount
Advertising (TV, Radio, Social Media)	Apportioned by elector	\$250,000
Advertising Print	Equal cost share x 16 councils (\$1,250 each)	\$20,000
Creative (Design)	Equal cost share x 16 councils (\$1,125 each)	\$18,000
Incidentals	Apportioned by elector	\$22,000
Events (Show circuit, COTA, NAIDOC)	Apportioned by elector	\$3,000
SMS	Apportioned by elector	\$25,000
Website	Equal cost share x 16 councils (\$312.50 each)	\$5,000

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As indicated in your revised cost estimate, the total estimate for advertising/public awareness for the City of Darwin is \$100,323. As discussed at our meeting yesterday, the cost estimate for advertising/public awareness for the 2021 Local Government Election was \$109,585 and the final actual total amount was \$71,623.

Basis of Cost Estimate

The NTEC is responsible for the delivery of general elections for and must conduct elections in accordance with the *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021*. Councils are responsible for paying the reasonable costs and expenses incurred by the NTEC. Costs for general elections are determined by combining costs directly attributable to each council with each council's share of total costs apportioned across all NT councils for delivering the election.

Direct costs attributable to an individual council include:

- Early and election day voting centres;
- Voting centre staff;
- Premises/venue hire;
- Materials;
- Logistics;
- Urban or Remote mobile voting staff; and
- Public Awareness activities, including statutory advertising, postal vote applications, website design and maintenance.

Apportioned costs are shared across all councils and generally calculated based on the number of electors on the electoral roll at the close of roll for each council. These costs include:

- Communications and media;
- Scrutiny centres leasing and materials costs;
- Ballot papers;
- Subject Matter Experts (for example Scrutiny Manager, Postal Voting Manager, IT and election management specialist, Regional Office Managers and Coordinators);
- Casual Staff Members;
- Postal Voting Services;
- Service Centre;
- IT services and management;
- Logistics; and
- Overtime only for NTEC based staff.

To support councils, the NTEC absorbs a number of costs including ongoing NTEC staff salaries, NTEC infrastructure, IT hardware and software, training requirements and office running costs. In addition, the NTEC sources assistance from other electoral commissions, such as the secondment of subject matter experts or the loan of 500 laptop devices, to control election related costs.

Each council receives an estimate based on a fully contested election with best estimate provision for election night count activities, inclusive of overtime. Councils are only invoiced

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for actual costs incurred by the NTEC. If an election is uncontested, appropriate adjustments are made to a council's direct costs.

Apportioned costs are calculated based on the number of electors at the close of roll. As at 31 May 2025 the total number of electors for the City of Darwin was 52,092 or 35.8% of total eligible electors. Below are close of roll figures that have been used to calculate apportioned costs for the 2025 Local Government Election. Both the Barkly Regional Council and the Groote Archipelago Regional Council have been excluded as these councils held general elections in November 2024 and March 2025 respectively.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	2025 Enrolment*	% of Total
Alice Springs Town Council	17,075	11.7
Barkly Regional Council		
Belyuen Community Government Council	168	0.1
Central Desert Regional Council	2,709	1.9
Coomalie Community Government Council	746	0.5
Darwin, City of	52,092	35.8
East Arnhem Regional Council	6,492	4.5
Groote Archipelago Regional Council		
Katherine Town Council	6,887	4.7
Litchfield Council	14,035	9.7
MacDonnell Regional Council	3,975	2.7
Palmerston, City of	26,081	17.9
Roper Gulf Regional Council	4,442	3.1
Tiwi Islands Regional Council	1,810	1.2
Victoria Daly Regional Council	1,884	1.3
Wagait Shire Council	346	0.2
West Arnhem Regional Council	4,387	3.0
West Daly Regional Council	2,262	1.6
Total enrolment for NT councils	145,391	100.0
* 2025 Enrolment as at 31 May 2025.		

The final apportioned costs for the 2025 Local Government Election will be based on close of roll figures as at 22 July 2025.

The City of Darwin will be charged the actual direct staffing costs of voting centre managers and staff attributed to the City of Darwin election. In addition, the City of Darwin will be charged on an apportioned basis, the staffing costs for shared voting facilities, call centre, urban mobile team, count /scrutiny centre activities and overtime only for NTEC and DCDD staff. For example, all staff working directly on election night for the count and publishing of

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preliminary results. The NTEC employs up to 500 casual staff members across the Territory to deliver the local government election. In addition, a number of subject matter experts, many from interstate commissions, are engaged to work with the NTEC in the conduct of the election. Interstate commission staff are seconded to the NTEC and only their overtime, travel and accommodation expenses are apportioned across councils. For some interstate staff members, salaries are also apportioned.

Information regarding working at NTEC as a casual staff member, inclusive of terms and conditions and salary ranges, can be obtained on the NTEC website at the following link: [Apply to work with us | NTEC](#)

I trust this information provides the additional clarity you were seeking to assist Council in its understanding of the complex nature of conducting a Territory-wide local government election event.

I have also attached for you an amended copy of the Electoral Service Agreement that contains the amended cost estimates. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Anna Malgorzewicz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kirsten Kelly', with a long, sweeping underline.

Kirsten Kelly
NT Electoral Commissioner

16 July 2025

Encl.

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10 REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES

Nil

11 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Nil

12 GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil

13 CLOSURE OF MEETING