

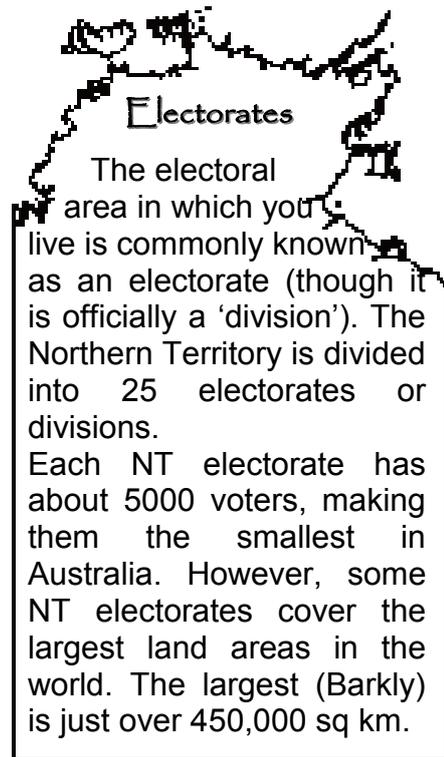
ELECTIONS and VOTING

Australia's system of government is known as a representative democracy. At each level of government, Australian citizens vote to elect a small number of people to 'represent' them in government. In the Northern Territory, these representatives are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

In the Northern Territory a general election is held on the fourth Saturday in August in the fourth year after the last general election (a fixed term election). Elections for the Legislative Assembly (as well as local councils) are conducted by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

On election day (or polling day) most people vote by going to a polling place near their homes, there are usually a number of them in each electorate and they are often located at schools or community centres. If you are unable to attend a polling place on polling day you can:

- **Pre-poll/early voting** - you can attend an early voting centre to cast your vote;
- **Postal voting** - you can apply to vote by post;
- **Absent voting** - you may vote at a polling place in whatever NT electorate you are in that day, even if you don't live there;
- **Mobile polling** - electoral officials visit remote communities, hospitals, care facilities and prisons to take votes.



The electoral area in which you live is commonly known as an electorate (though it is officially a 'division'). The Northern Territory is divided into 25 electorates or divisions. Each NT electorate has about 5000 voters, making them the smallest in Australia. However, some NT electorates cover the largest land areas in the world. The largest (Barkly) is just over 450,000 sq km.

Who can Vote?

You must be enrolled on the electoral roll to vote at an election. Australian citizens can enrol to vote at 16 years of age - but can only vote when they are 18. The electoral roll is a list of names and addresses of all electors who can vote in government elections.

To qualify for voting you must be:

- 18 years or older
- An Australian citizen or British subject enrolled on 25 January 1984
- Living at your current address for the last month.

The law requires all eligible persons to enrol and vote.



Electoral officials set up mobile polling booths in various remote locations to ensure all those eligible can exercise their right to vote.

Photo from www.theaustralian.com.au