

Estimates Committee 2009 Questions Taken On Notice

(16/6/2009 to 19/6/2009)

Date: 16/06/2009 Output: 1.0 - Electoral Services
Sub Output: 1.1 Electoral Services
Subject: NT Electoral Commission - Litchfield Shire Council election

From: Mr Gerry Wood to Chief Minister Paul Henderson
Northern Territory Electoral Commission

Question: **3-1**
Could the Electoral Commissioner find out whether the pre-poll voting system for Litchfield Shire Council was different than that used at the NT government elections? If so, could he explain what that system was and why it may have been different?

Answer:
Answered On:
Answer: Litchfield Council was accorded the status of municipality from 1 July 2008. Its general elections took place on 25 October 2008 at the same time as the inaugural elections for newly created shire councils.

Provisions governing pre-poll voting at the municipal elections held 29 March 2008 and the Legislative Assembly elections held 9 August 2008, required electors voting pre-poll to place their ballot papers directly in the ballot box unless the division/council for which the elector was enrolled was in another region. In such cases the ballot paper was placed in an envelope bearing the name of the division/council and the pre-poll centre.

The Local Government (Electoral) Regulations (LGER) for conducting local government elections were revised and gazetted 29 August 2008 and used for the first time at the October 2008 elections. In most instances the regulations mirror the provisions for the conduct of parliamentary elections contained in the NT Electoral Act (NTEA) 2004. As is the case for parliamentary elections, an elector who is eligible for a postal vote may, instead of voting by post, vote before polling day at an early voting centre [Application for postal voting papers (LGER Regulation 25)].

However under the new regulations [Declaration voting - Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 22-24], electors wanting to vote in person prior to polling day are required to complete and sign a declaration affirming their eligibility to vote by post. The requirement to sign a declaration also applies to electors:

- voting outside their council area on polling day (Absent vote)
- whose name cannot be found on the electoral roll (Not on roll)
- whose name has been marked off the roll as having already voted (Already voted) .

All 730 Litchfield Council electors who voted in person before polling day for the shire and rural council elections on 25 October 2008 would have completed a declaration envelope (see next page).

The requirement for electors voting early or outside their electorate to complete a declaration envelope is not an uncommon procedure in other electoral jurisdictions though some are moving away from that. Strict procedures are followed to ensure ballot envelope security and to maintain the secrecy of the vote when ballot papers are extracted from the envelopes.

Note that the Department of Local Government and Housing has carriage of local government legislation.