



Media Release

for immediate release



News item from MacDonnell Regional Council released on 11 December 2017 page 1

For further information please contact MacDonnell Regional Council, Communications Officer Darren Pfitzner by phone 0428 040 485 or email media@macdonnell.nt.gov.au



New way to vote in the bush



MacDonnell Regional Council welcomes a new councillor and a new way to vote in remote Aboriginal communities following a recent by-election in its Luritja Pintubi ward.



Following the sad passing of Councillor L Abbott shortly after his re-election, this by-election attracted a field of three candidates that included Giselle Barku from Kintore, Dalton McDonald from Papunya and Audrey Turner from Mount Liebig.



After the distribution of preferences and postal votes, life long member of the Papunya community Dalton McDonald was declared the winner of the by-election on Friday afternoon by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.



Upon learning of his recent election as a councillor, Dalton said “ he was surprised, but very happy and very proud to be representing his people ”.



The final declaration leaves just enough time for Mr McDonald to be inducted in council procedures this week ahead MacDonnell Regional Council’s final Ordinary Council meeting for the year this coming Friday.



Following the low voter turn out across the Territory in the recent local government elections held in August (most notably so in remote communities), MacDonnell Regional Council hosted a trial to access a higher voter turnout in the Luritja Pintubi ward by-election.



Working from the high proportion of early voters in municipal councils during the general local government elections in August, MacDonnell Regional Council hosted a voting week for this by-election to see if the trend could be replicated by residents in remote communities.



Previously electoral commission staff would travel through remote communities, stopping to set up mobile voting booths for a few hours before packing up and travelling onto another community.



Rather than having mobile voting officials visit each community briefly during the by-election, MacDonnell Regional Council provided the electoral service in their council offices on each community for the week leading to the Election Day of Friday 1 December 2017.



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During the voting week 375 people participated in the Luritja Pintubi ward communities of Kintore, Mt Liebig, Papunya and Haasts Bluff resulting in a 17.5% voter increase from the general local government election held in August.



Because of cultural business activities taking place in the region the booths were not able to open until the second day of the week – however this proved the trial system’s advantage, as under the old mobile voting system this would have completely prevented voting in at least half of the communities.



Other observations show a marked increase in votes in some communities and a significant drop in informal votes across the ward.



End.

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