

Elections – frequently asked questions

How will an election affect my work?

I'm an NT government employee, how does an election affect my work?

- Working in the NTPS during an election period
- What is the caretaker period?
- What happens during the caretaker period?
- How will the caretaker period affect me or my job?
- Obligations to the 'Government of the day'
- What does it mean to maintain 'political neutrality'?

Working in the NTPS during an election period?

What happens when an election is called?

An election is called when the writ for the election is issued by the Administrator. Once this happens the NTPS goes into what is called the 'Caretaker Period'.

What is the caretaker period?

This is the period which commences immediately after an election is called and extends up to the point at which a new Government is sworn in. In particular, following the dissolution of parliament, the Government assumes a "caretaker" role and avoids taking major policy decisions, making appointments of significance, or entering into major undertakings or contracts.

What happens during the caretaker period?

For most employees, business continues as normal. However, significant decisions should be avoided during this period. For example, entering into major contracts or procurement, making major policy decisions or appointments of significance.

How will the caretaker period affect me or my job?

The Caretaker Period may impact on some employees' duties during a Northern Territory or other jurisdiction election. For example, Ministerial correspondence between affected jurisdictions may need to be delayed and policy making processes, particularly those involving Ministers, are likely to be suspended during this period.

Obligations to the Government of the day

The *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* (PSEMA) sets out the functions of public sector agency Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Under PSEMA, CEOs are subject to the direction of the portfolio Minister and are responsible to that Minister for his or her performance of their functions. In turn, CEOs direct employees of their agency in the duties they perform to enable the agency to achieve its stated outcomes. In carrying out their duties, employees are required under PSEMA to observe certain principles of conduct. Public Sector employees are therefore obliged to serve their Ministers, within the law, with skill, impartiality, professionalism and integrity.

What does it mean to maintain ‘political neutrality’?

In our role as NTPS employees we are required to serve the Government of the day. We must act to ensure not only that our agency maintains the confidence of its Minister or Ministers, but also to ensure that it is able to establish the same professional and impartial relationship should there be a change in Minister/Government. This convention of political neutrality is designed to ensure the NTPS provides strong support for good government of the Northern Territory, regardless of the political party in power.

Where do I go for further information?

You can obtain further information by:

- contacting your agency’s HR area
- going to the webpage [NTPS Employees and Elections](#)
- going to the webpage [Code of Conduct](#)
- going to the webpage [Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993](#)
- going to the [Cabinet and Secretariat’s toolbox](#) page for information about how the caretaker period affects all of Government activities and view the following documents [Guidance on Caretaker Conventions](#) and the [Caretaker Conventions FAQs](#).