

Election of a Principal Member

This factsheet provides additional information to the proposed amendments to the *Local Government Act 2019*, as outlined in Discussion Paper Part B. Please refer to this [paper](#) for full details.

What is a principal member?

A principal member is the Lord Mayor (City of Darwin), the Mayor, or President of a Northern Territory local government council.

Principal members have duties in addition to other elected members under section 59 the *Local Government Act 2019* (the Act). These include, among other things, chairing meetings of the council and promoting behaviours within the council that meet the code of conduct.

How is a principal member selected?

Under section 60 of the Act, the principal member of a council can be elected or appointed to the office.

If a council chooses for its principal member to be elected, the office is to be filled at each general election.

If the principal member position of a council is to be filled by appointment, the council must, at the first meeting of a council after a general election, appoint one of its members to be the principal member.

The term of office for the principal member, whether elected or appointed is until the next general election.

What legislative changes are being considered?

There are some changes being considered regarding the selection of principle members in councils across the NT. Any changes will be made based on the views expressed by the local government sector.

Currently, if a council appoints its principal member, they must make the appointment in the first meeting after the general election. While this means that there is formal leadership in place, having to make the appointment so soon after the election can be difficult for newly elected members, who must select a leader before getting to know the other members.

Extending the time by which elected members must appoint a leader will allow members more time to make an informed decision. They will have more time to build working relationships and assess the leadership styles of fellow elected members. It is proposed to extend the time to appoint a principal member to the fourth ordinary meeting of the newly elected council.

Another amendment being considered is an appointment-only model, where no principal member in the NT would be voted in but are all selected by appointment by elected members. This would allow for more consistency across the NT on the selection of principal members, instead of having the current two different selection processes.