



Local Government's Stakeholder Newsletter

Edition 3 | December 2021

Local government sector update

As we have come to the end of 2021, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the local government sector in achieving some significant milestones this year.

The recent local government elections have brought newly elected members, and returned experienced members, with diverse skills and backgrounds. Congratulations to all new and re-elected council members.

The commencement of the new *Local Government Act 2019* was a significant milestone. I would like to thank all councils for your collaboration and hard work to transition to the new requirements of the Act.

One of the key changes introduced by the new Act is a requirement for all council members to complete approved professional development courses within the first 12 months of being elected. In its first round, this professional development program aims to establish a common understanding of the fundamental requirements of being an elected representative at the local level.

The Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet (CM&C) has developed 3 initial courses and a further 3 courses will be available in early 2022, to provide essential foundation knowledge to council members. We greatly appreciate the feedback given by councils in the development of these courses. We are in the process of engaging each council for face-to-face delivery of the courses in a way that suits each council and provides the opportunity for the training to be tailored to your council's issues and experiences.

CM&C has recently developed a Local Government Resource Hub to support the sector. This resource hub is a secured webpage designed to host a range of information and support documents for councils. The resource hub will be regularly updated and maintained by CM&C. I encourage you to read more about this, and other key topics, in the articles below.

Maree De Lacey
Executive Director
Local Government and Regional Development

Local government resource hub

CM&C has developed a local government resource hub, which is an online resource for a range of important information for the sector. It includes sample policies, explanatory papers and supporting resources for councils.

The resource hub will be updated on a regular basis and

councils will be notified when new versions of important documents have been uploaded.

We encourage any feedback you may have to improve the website and ensure it provides relevant information and material to support councils.

How to access the resource hub

Username: localgov

Password: localgov2106

If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback, please email LGQuestions.cmc@nt.gov.au.



Visit the resource hub

Elected member professional development

The Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet (CM&C) has developed professional development courses for elected members. Many council members have already undertaken the 3 initial courses this year.

A further 3 courses will be available in early 2022, to provide essential foundation knowledge to council members.

If your council is yet to complete the first 3 courses, please get in touch with us to arrange a suitable date for either online or face-to-face delivery.

We greatly appreciate the feedback given by councils in the development of these courses.

The Council and the CEO relationship

Recruiting and reviewing

The relationship between the council and the CEO is crucial and a key to delivering outcomes for the community. Managing the recruitment of new CEOs can be a challenge for councils, and there are a number of councils who will be going through the process over the next months.

As part of the training and support offered by Local Government and Regional Development, we are developing guidance materials for councils about CEO recruitment, CEO contracts and performance management.

Tailored support will also be available to councils by contacting 8999 8568.



Local government elections

For the 2021 local government elections, field officers in CM&C's regions engaged 3,580 community residents across 80 communities and submitted 297 requests to either enrol or update the electoral roll.

Since 2019, CM&C has promoted public awareness and engaged with residents in remote Aboriginal communities and homelands. In particular, the *Your Voice, Your Community* campaign prioritised Aboriginal Interpreter Services and the application of remote engagement principles.



Due to the nature of the work and logistical challenges, CM&C staff cannot achieve this on their own and we thank the partnerships and support offered by LGANT, regional councils and other local organisations to ensure community residents were encouraged to enrol as voters, nominate for various positions and to vote.

By the close of nominations on 5 August 2021, 303 local government candidates had nominated for the 159 vacant positions across all councils with only two wards not receiving the required nominations.

Snapshot of our Regional Network Group

As part of the 2020 machinery of government changes, the former Local Government and Community Development Division's Regional Managers and Community Development Officers merged into CM&C's Regional Network Group teams in each region.

The Regional Network Group and Local Government and Regional Development are part of CM&C's Territory Regional Growth Division.

Future newsletters will provide a snapshot of each of our regional teams to highlight what each of the teams are working on and how they are supporting their regional councils.



Highlighting the Central Australia region

The Central Australia region is led by Brendan Blandford, Regional Executive Director, and provides support and engagement to local government councils on matters relating to Central Australia. The team also attends local authority meetings and takes questions on notice in relation to NTG service delivery.

The Central Australia regional team recently worked on the election awareness campaign, *Your Voice, Your Community*. As part of this campaign, representatives of Central Australia region travelled to 25 communities in June and July to encourage electoral enrolment, nominating for council and voting.

Central Australia region is currently looking at local decision making opportunities in 4 priority communities including Santa Teresa, Yuendumu, Papunya and Hermannsburg.

Central Australia also provides ongoing support for the Papunya Leaders Group. This group formed to discuss important matters of the community which do not get discussed in other forums. NTG agencies and other service providers attend the meetings to provide information and receive feedback from the group. The team organises, supports, and provides secretariat for these meetings.

Local Authority Desktop Review

Developing the role of local authorities

Local authorities were established by the Minister under the Act to give communities a voice in their regional council's planning, prioritisation, local funding and decision-making as it affects their community, and to assist two-way communication between councils and their communities.

The Local Authority Review is currently being conducted with the purpose of informing CM&C and regional councils about the extent to which each council's local authorities (LAs) are delivering against this intent.



The first stage of the review has considered:

- overall adherence by each regional council with the intent of the former *Local Government Act 2008* in relation to each local authority;
- success stories and challenges that could be shared with other councils, local authorities, and the NT Public Service (by agreement with the relevant council);
- improvements to CM&C policy and administrative requirements; and
- a review of the project funding guidelines that enable local authorities to work with their community to identify priority projects for funding.

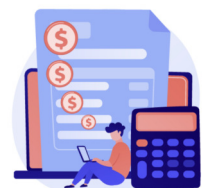
In January 2022, a draft report will be provided to each council detailing the findings of the desktop review as they relate to their council. Once council feedback is incorporated, the report will be finalised and provided to the Minister for Local Government.

The project leader, Ms Ann Lewis, Manager, Strategic Projects and Development, can be contacted via LG.compliance@nt.gov.au or on (08) 8999 8524, should you have any queries in relation to the Local Authority Review.

Finance reporting and forms

The department is working on finalising the following new forms (templates) which are intended to be released for comment in January 2022 and finalised for use by February 2022:

- the approved form for the monthly financial report (councils)
- the approved form for the quarterly financial report (local government subsidiary)
- Guideline 5: Budgets (which includes the required form of the budget)
- Guideline 6: Annual reports (which includes required financial tables for the annual report).



Mandatory review of council delegations

Under the *Local Government Act 2019* a council may delegate its powers and functions to the council CEO; a council committee; a local authority; or a local government subsidiary. Councils are reminded that under the Act it must review any delegations of its functions and powers within 6 months after a general election for the council.

This means the council must consider its delegations at a council meeting by no later than 13 March 2022.

Council budget review

Councils are reminded it must undertake two formal budget reviews in a financial year, being at least once between 1 July and 31 December; and at least once between 1 January and 30 April.

If the council adopts an amended budget as a result of the review which has a material impact on the council's long-term financial plan, the council must, by resolution, amend the council's long-term financial plan at the same time as adopting the amended budget. The council must publish the amended budget on its website; and notify the Agency in writing of the adoption of the amended budget; and publish a notice in a newspaper circulating generally in the area that the amended budget may be downloaded from the council's website or obtained from the council's public office.

Placing a notice in a newsletter in place of a newspaper is not compliant with the Act. Council's original budget must remain published on its website with a clear note stating that the budget has been superseded by an amended budget.

Grants

Local government immediate priority grants

The new local government immediate priority grants program was approved by the Minister for Local Government in 2021. This program replaces last year's priority infrastructure fund.

The program will enable local government councils and other local government funded organisations the opportunity to receive funding directed at immediate infrastructure related projects and animal management programs.

There was one round of funding totalling \$3.4 million for 2021-22.

Councils should receive advice early in 2022 about their applications for these grants.



Waste and resource management funding program

The Minister for Local Government has approved an allocation of \$1.8 million to continue the waste and resource management funding program in 2021-22. This funding program is available to regional and shire councils.

ICAC

Preventing improper conduct starts with understanding

All elected members are required to understand their role as a public officer and the responsibilities of a public body.

Some common corruption risks in the local government sector include failures to manage conflicts of interest, undeclared gifts and benefits, and the misuse of public resources. Local government bodies that actively address and manage corruption risks are better positioned to uphold effective governance and efficient service delivery to the community.



The office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (ICAC) works to prevent, detect and respond to improper conduct in the Northern Territory.

The ICAC works with local government council staff and elected members to develop tailored information sessions that cover important information about the ICAC Act. These sessions include information on mandatory reporting, ICAC's report-handling process, whistle-blower protection, conflicts of interest and relevant case studies from other jurisdictions.

Contact ICAC to arrange a tailored information session by emailing icac.communications@icac.nt.gov.au.

For more information about the ICAC, visit icac.nt.gov.au.

Seeking advice?

Council members and council staff may need to seek advice for a range of reasons.

For advice on local or regional issues, you can contact:

CM&C Regional Executive Directors

Darwin/Palmerston/Litchfield: Michelle Walker - 8999 8347

Top End: Sandra Schmidt - 8999 5236

East Arnhem: Jim Rogers - 8987 0554

Big Rivers: Jake Quinlivan - 8973 8533

Barkly: Craig Kelly - 8962 4688

Central Desert: Brendan Blandford - 8951 5511

For advice on legislation, compliance issues, governance, and Territory-wide policy and programs, you can contact:

Local Government and Regional Development

Executive Director: Maree De Lacey - 8999 8573

Sustainability and Compliance: Meeta Ramkumar - 8999 8868

Legislation and Policy: Brad Jolly - 8999 8405

Remote Information and Engagement: Brett Beaton - 8999 6149

Regional Development: Darren Johnson - 8999 8892

For all other queries, please email: LGquestions.cmc@nt.gov.au.

Further information

For further information and support, please visit the [Local Government and Regional Development](#) website.

Any questions can be emailed to LGquestions.cmc@nt.gov.au.



What do you want to see in this newsletter?

We welcome your feedback to help us ensure the content provided in this newsletter is relevant and engaging. Please send an email to localgovernment.CMC@nt.gov.au.