



Edition 1 | March 2024

## Governance Officers Forum

LGU facilitated the second Governance Officer's Forum on 7 February, 2024. The group shared information on council committees, agendas, papers and minutes and accountability and transparency of councils.

The next forum will be held mid-year. Contact **Jacob Leonard on 8999 8524** if you would like to join the group.

## CEO and Council Officers Handbook

A series of guides have been developed covering key topics for CEOs and council staff for quick reference on roles, responsibilities and requirements. The handbook is available on Local Government Unit website covering the following topics:

- Overview of Local Government
- Governance Compliance and CEO role
- Supporting Council
- Supporting and Developing the Workforce
- Financial Management and Rates
- Procurement and Asset management

CEO and Council Officers Handbook

## Cross-government principles

In July 2023, the Northern Territory government endorsed the Cross-government Principles which were co-designed with LGANT and representatives from councils to guide effective collaboration between the two spheres of government. Each government agency and local government council has nominated a cross-government principles 'champion' with responsibility for building and maintaining positive and cooperative relationships between organisations.

LGU continues to support opportunities which strengthen procedures, processes and information between spheres of government. Please contact **Kate Race on 0427 628 487** for further information or to discuss opportunities in your region.

## Cross-government principles in action

### West Arnhem Regional Council/ Warruwi

A collaboration between NT Department of Education and West Arnhem Regional Council (WARC) staff at Warruwi has successfully delivered strong community-based programs including footy and fitness programs for women and introducing more families to the Families as First Teachers and Council programs and job opportunities.

*Below image (courtesy of WARC and Warruwi School) – Combined Footy Training Session*



### Roper Gulf Regional Council

Roper Gulf Regional Council staff have committed to upgrading their skills through undertaking a Certificate IV in training and assessment with an aim to deliver the NT government's 'Back on Track' drink and drug driver course. Currently one of the biggest barrier for jobseekers joining the workforce is re-gaining a driver's licence. RGRC aims to improve access to the course, improve safety on the roads and assist local people into more jobs.

### City of Palmerston, City of Darwin and Litchfield Community Council

The three Councils have been working closely with NT Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet through the Greater Darwin Regional Network Group partnership, to assist people with high needs and vulnerabilities link to support services and agencies such as health, social security and the Return to Country programs. The Local Council Rangers work independently and collaboratively with other agencies and stakeholders including Larrakia Nation and the NT government's Aboriginal Interpreter Service, contributing to daily and weekly meetings of cross agency groups for rapid responses. Over the 2023–24 wet season additional short-term and emergency accommodation has been stood-up to support people.

### Getting back to School

NT Department of Education has worked closely with the cross-agency teams in Darwin and Palmerston City Councils to support school-aged children enrol in school and with Territory Families Housing and Communities assist families return to remote communities in time for the start of term 1 of school for 2024.

In Central Australia the Department of Education provides support through subsidised bus transport and family payments for those with school-aged children by working with Tangentyere Council, NPY Women's Council, [Central Desert Regional Council](#) and [MacDonnell Regional Council](#) community services and youth teams.

## Cemetery Management: Capacity Building for Councils

It has been slightly over a year since the [Burial and Cremation Act 2022](#) commenced in November 2022. One of the key objectives of the legislation is recognition of cemeteries and other burial areas in all locations in the Northern Territory, including remote and regional communities. While there are currently only 15 gazetted cemeteries in the Territory, it is envisioned that with time, the number of gazetted cemeteries will grow.

To support councils to comply with cemetery management requirements in the legislation, the Local Government Unit established the Local Government Cemeteries Working Group (the Working Group) in November 2022. To date, the Working Group has held five meetings where councils have discussed and shared information about various key topics including:

- processes for declaring cemeteries;
- resources for the management and administration of cemeteries including policies, registers, guidelines, explanatory papers and forms (copies of these documents can be downloaded from the [Local Government Resource Hub](#) (username: localgov and password: localgov2106);
- funding opportunities for cemeteries; and
- other burial and cremation legislation requirements for councils.

Councils are encouraged to nominate staff responsible for cemetery policy and administration to attend Working Group meetings. Nominations can be made by sending an email to [burials@nt.gov.au](mailto:burials@nt.gov.au) or calling 8999 8589.

## Regional and Remote Burial Areas Grant Program

11 projects from seven local government councils and two Aboriginal organisations totalling \$0.54 million are being supported under the 2023-24 Regional and Remote Burial Areas (RRBA) grant program. The key objective of the RRBA grant is to support regional councils, shire councils and other local organisations to fund activities that contribute to the protection and maintenance of burial areas in regional and remote locations in the Northern Territory.

Some of the activities funded under the 2023-24 grant program include:

- identification and marking of boundaries for new burial areas;
- fencing of burial areas;
- purchasing of equipment for cemetery management such as casket lowering devices and protective clothing;
- installation of signage and shade structures; and
- restoration and preservation of graves and burial records;

The next round of RRBA funding is scheduled to open later in 2024.

## Opportunities for Local government employment: Community work and fine conversion

The Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet (CM&C) and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice (AGD) are working with the Northern Territory local government sector, to explore opportunities for individuals undertaking community work or fine conversion to work in the local government sector. This will be done through an assessment of relevant government legislation, policies and initiatives, with a view to upskill communities and address skills shortages in the local government sector.

A Steering Group with representation from CM&C, AGD and the local government sector has been set up. The purpose of the Steering Group is to define opportunities that may be available for councils to address skills shortages, and for community members to be able to contribute to their community and gain skills, through AGD legislation, policy and initiatives. The Steering Group will also identify barriers to the opportunities and possible resolutions to the opportunities.

Accordingly, the Steering Group welcomes any contributions on how individuals undertaking community work or fine conversion can help in addressing skills shortages in the sector. Contributions can include the following:

- details on skills shortages currently being faced by councils, including identifying the areas where councils require more staff
- past experiences with engaging and working with individuals undergoing community work
- any relevant suggestions of matters to include in the report.

Please feel free to email any contributions to the report to [LGLaw.CMC@nt.gov.au](mailto:LGLaw.CMC@nt.gov.au) by Friday 29 March 2024.

**2nd formal budget review to be conducted between 1 January to 30 April 2024**

Councils are required to perform two formal budget reviews within a financial year. The first review should take place between 1 July and 31 December, and the second review should occur between 1 January and 30 April.

If a council makes changes to its budget during these reviews that significantly affect its long-term financial plan, the council must pass a resolution to amend the long-term financial plan simultaneously with adopting the amended budget.

To ensure compliance with the requirements outlined in section 203 of the Local Government Act 2019, a council as soon as practicable after adopting its amended budget must:

- publish the amended budget on the council's website,
- notify the Agency in writing about the adoption of the amended budget (i.e.; Department of Chief Minister & Cabinet)
- publish a notice in a newspaper that circulates widely in the area, informing the public that the amended budget can be downloaded from the council's website or obtained from the council's public office.

It's important to note that substituting a notice in the council's newsletter for a notice in a locally circulating newspaper does not comply with the Local Government Act. The original budget must remain accessible on the council's website with a clear statement indicating that it has been replaced by an amended budget.

## Local Authorities consultation in preparation for the 2024-25 budget

Council's budget and long-term financial plan for the year 2024-25 must be adopted by 30 June 2024. During any budget review, Local Authority budgets should also be assessed and adjusted as needed in consultation with the Local Authority. This is essential to ensure that each local authority's budget aligns with current community needs.

Councils must prioritise planning and conducting consultations with the Local Authorities in the coming months.

## Local Authority Review

The Local Authority (LA) Review and Implementation Plan were finalised in the middle of 2023.

A key change has been to provide more flexibility to enable LAs to spend their LA Project Fund money. The Local Government Unit (LGU) is providing briefings for regional councils and local authorities on the LA Review and changes. If we haven't made it to your council or LA yet, we will be there soon and are available to work through any changes with your council and LA.

### Local Government Publications and Reports

## Training Modules for LAs

LGU has developed 3 presentations based on the council governance foundation courses on:

- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Code of Conduct and;
- Conflicts of Interest

that can be delivered to your LA, as well as a course for Chairs and Deputy Chairs on Role of the Chair and Working Together.

Training resources are available at the [Local Government Resource Hub](#) (username: localgov and password: localgov2106) from the link below:

### Local Authority Member Training Resources

## Emerging leaders and developing young people

LAs are embracing the LA Review, and we have collected some great examples of work that has taken place. One of the key themes is getting young people more involved and supporting emerging leaders.

The West Arnhem Regional Council (WARC), supported by the NT Department of Education, the National Indigenous Australians Agency and Gunbalanya School, held an inaugural Youth Leadership Summit in November, bringing together 50 young attendees from Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Minjilang, Waruwi and Jabiru. The Summit's focus was on building leadership capacity, identifying current needs of young people in West Arnhem Land and presenting a shared vision for youth outcomes. The insights gained will inform strategic direction of local community youth initiatives.

Local Authority members for the Gunbalanya Ward have formally invited senior students to attend LA meetings. This is a great opportunity for senior students to learn what it means to represent Gunbalanya as a LA member.

At the LGANT convention in November 2023 we heard from MacDonnell Regional Councillors that the LAs were a great entry point to governance for young people and that they were seeing more young people getting involved and then going on to nominate for council.

The Roper Gulf Regional Council (RGRC) have welcomed new provisional membership, which allows councils to get new LA members on board quickly. This has resulted in the filling of 2 long term vacancies on the Manyallaluk Local Authority.

## LAs in action

### Central Desert Regional Council / Anmatjere LA

The Anmatjere LA has a vision where they want to be a hub for tourism and services for their own and surrounding communities and their priority project is a Child Care Centre service. To help progress this objective, the LA, the Council and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) collaborated to produce content and videos that were presented to the Minister for Indigenous Australians. They have now secured funding, and capital works are expected to commence by July 2024.

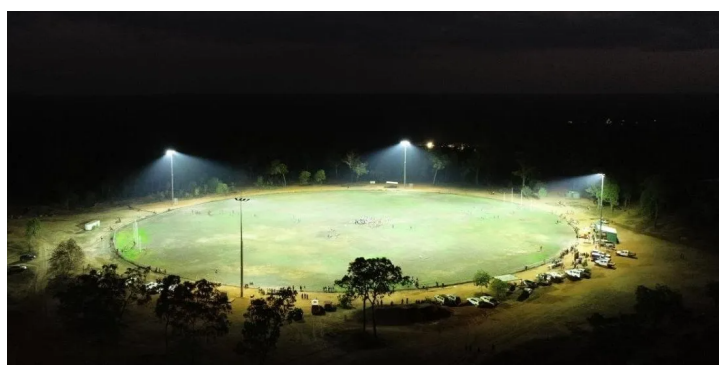


### Vic Daly Regional Council / Nauiyu LA / Yarralin LA

The Yarralin and Nauiyu LAs utilised funding through the Local Government Community Places for People (CPP) grant program, and combined it with LA project funding to upgrade playground infrastructure. At the end of 2023 a brand new playground was built in Yarralin and the Nauiyu playground received a complete overhaul, with new play equipment and a soft fall installed.

### East Arnhem Regional Council / Ramingining LA

The East Arnhem Regional Council (EARC) supported a project to install new lighting at the Ramingining Oval, made possible through a combination of EARC's reserve funding and LA Project Funding. The oval lights cover a substantial area and ensure that events and activities can last well into the night. The project was completed in October, and EARC organised its first-ever night game of AFL held between local teams, the Magpies and the Buffalos to celebrate.



We would love to hear your stories. Please contact

Jacob Leonard at [jacob.leonard@nt.gov.au](mailto:jacob.leonard@nt.gov.au) or phone 8999 8524. Jacob can also be contacted to arrange LA Review and training presentations.

## Local government resource hub

The Hub provides access to a range of important information for the sector. It includes sample policies, explanatory papers and supporting resources for local government.

The resource hub can be accessed directly by following the link: [Visit the resource hub](#) (username: localgov and password: localgov2106)

Questions, feedback and suggestions about the Local Government Resource Hub can be emailed to [LGQuestions.cmc@nt.gov.au](mailto:LGQuestions.cmc@nt.gov.au)



[Visit the resource hub](#)

## Seeking advice?

We welcome your emails, phone calls or requests for meetings.

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

### Local Government Unit

All enquiries are now being received through [LGQuestions.cmc@nt.gov.au](mailto:LGQuestions.cmc@nt.gov.au) as the first point of contact for the Local Government Unit.

**Executive Director:** Maree De Lacey - 8999 8573

**Sustainability and Compliance:** Meeta Ramkumar - 8999 8868

**Legislation and Policy:** Susan Watson - 8999 8405

**Policy and Projects (including governance training):** Kate Race - 8999 8919

For information about regional partnership opportunities, NT Government services and programs, or advice on place-based issues in your local or regional area, you can contact:

### CM&C Regional Executive Directors

**Darwin/Palmerston/Litchfield:** Michelle Walker - 8999 8347

**Top End:** Michelle Walker - 8999 8347

**East Arnhem:** Jim Rogers - 8987 0554

**Big Rivers:** Jake Quinlivan - 8973 8533

**Barkly:** Lachlan Wilkins - 8962 4688

**Central Australia:** Sarah Crossman - 8951 5909

## 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](mailto:LGquestions.cmc@nt.gov.au).



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