

# Local Authorities

FACT SHEET  
2016



## Local authorities

Local authorities have been established in 63 regional and remote communities across nine regional councils. Local authorities:

- give community members more involvement with the delivery of local services;
- help regional councils develop solutions to local issues; and
- give community members the opportunity to participate in local planning and decision-making that impacts their community.

An ongoing \$5 million per year is provided to regional councils for local priority projects that are determined by local authorities.

Local authorities were established after Territory-wide community consultations, in direct response to concerns that Territorians living in regional and remote areas had lost their voice in local service delivery matters.

## How do local authorities work?

Local authorities have between 6 and 14 members. Members are appointed by their regional council following expressions of interest from the local community. Local authorities also include the local elected ward members as well as the mayor or president of the regional council.

Local authorities are governed under the *Local Government Act* (Chapters 5 and 6) and Ministerial Guidelines for Regional Councils and Local Authorities (Guideline 8), available in the legislation section of the Department of Local Government and Community Services' website [www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au](http://www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au). Amendments to Guideline 8 came into effect in 2016.

Local authorities can only be established within the nine regional council areas of the Northern Territory by the Minister responsible for local government. Once a local authority is declared by the Minister, the relevant regional council must take steps to establish the local authority.

Guideline 8 outlines the following requirements for local authorities:

- the locations of local authorities;
- member nominations and appointments;
- the number of meetings per year;
- meeting arrangements;
- agenda items and minutes;
- the functions of local authorities;
- member allowances; and
- reports from regional councils.

Regional councils, in consultation with local authorities, develop policies to cover code of conduct, revocation of membership and other governance and operational matters.

Local authorities cannot authorise expenditure or direct regional councils to take specific actions within their communities.

The role of local authorities is to make recommendations to regional councils. In turn, regional councils are required by Guideline 8 to ensure that all recommendations made by local authorities are considered and responded to.

Local authorities can have powers or functions formally delegated to them by regional councils with the levels of delegation being determined by each regional council.

### What happens in local authority meetings?

Guideline 8 outlines a range of service delivery and financial reports that must be provided to local authority members to ensure they are fully informed about the services delivered in their area. In order for a recommendation to go to a regional council, it must be passed by formal resolution.

There is flexibility for regional councils and local authorities to run meetings in a manner that suits the local community, as long as the formal requirements of meetings are met.

A key focus of local authority meetings is a list of action items which are priorities for the community. At every meeting, regional councils are required to provide a progress update on how these action items are being addressed. There are also opportunities for visitor presentations by other organisations delivering services in the community such as NTG agencies.

### Priority projects

Many of the action items discussed at local authority meetings are priority projects determined by the local community. The NTG provides \$5 million per year across regional councils to support local priority projects, which are identified by the local authority and then delivered by the regional council.

This funding is allocated to each local authority according to a formula developed by the Northern Territory Government Grants Commission. Guidelines for the funding are available on the department's website [www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au](http://www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au).

Local authority priority project funding has been used for a range of small and large projects including solar street lighting, public toilets, playgrounds, shade structures, sporting ground upgrades and other local recreational facilities. These projects have also provided opportunities for collaboration with NTG agencies for mutually beneficial outcomes.

### Engaging with local authorities

Local authorities are the preferred body for NTG engagement with remote communities across portfolios. NTG agencies wishing to attend local authority meetings should, in the first instance, contact the Local Authority Coordination Unit in the Department of Local Government and Community Services. More information about the policy framework for local authorities and coordination processes for engagement with local authorities is available on the department's website [www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au](http://www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au).

