



Review of Regional Governance Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

11 March 2013

What is regional governance?

Regional governance includes local government councils as well as a wider range of government service delivery and consultation in regional and remote Northern Territory.

Why is government reviewing regional governance?

The Northern Territory Government is committed to delivering a stronger local voice and quality services in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory.

The review of local governance in regional and remote areas aims to:

- make sure people living in regional and remote areas have a strong voice in local government and other government programs
- use local knowledge, authority and responsibility
- keep strong accountability and good service standards.

What is the Regional Governance Working Group?

The Minister for Local Government established the Regional Governance Working Group to develop options for wide spread consultation on strengthening regional governance.

Members of the Regional Governance Working Group were selected by the Minister and include community leaders, elected representatives from shire councils and land councils, and industry representatives.

The Regional Governance Working Group is chaired by Mr Damien Ryan, President of the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) and Mayor of Alice Springs Town Council.

What are the options for improved regional governance?

The Regional Governance Working Group has proposed two options for consultation.

Regional Councils

The first is the Regional Councils option. This option would provide a stronger local voice on council programs and services at the community level. The proposed Regional Councils will coordinate services to a large area but would include Local Authorities that would advise the Regional Council on what services and programs they need in their community. Local Authorities would also have an allocated budget to manage minor repairs locally (like road works) and provide personal services (like help with complex forms or urgent travel).

Regional Authorities

The second option is the Regional Authorities option. It is a long term goal for regional governance. This option is built on a partnership between the local government council, the Northern Territory and the Australian government and other important stakeholders who would develop an agreed regional strategy for service delivery and development. Local Authorities would operate in the same way as in the Regional Council option and would advise the Regional Authority on the community's needs.

Consultation with community residents and key stakeholders may identify other options for improving regional governance in their community.

How do the proposed options differ to current local governance arrangements?

Currently Shire Councils are not required to have a local advisory group. Under the proposed Regional Councils option, Local Authorities must be established and would have more authority. No big decisions or plans would be made about council services and programs without the Local Authority being involved.

When will more detail about the options be released?

The Regional Governance Working Group discussed a variety of options for improving regional governance and are finalising an options paper which outlines the context of Northern Territory local governments in regional and remote communities. It also provides more detail on the proposed options for improving regional governance.

The options paper will be released in the coming weeks to seek feedback on the proposed options for regional governance.

When will improvements be made?

If the proposed Regional Council option is supported by community consultation, some significant changes could be made quickly to strengthen the local voice through the establishment of Local Authorities. Some changes could occur by 1 July 2013 and some other changes requiring amendments the *NT Local Government Act* could happen before the end of 2013.

Following extensive consultation on strengthening regional governance, the government will review all the information and feedback to decide what improvements need to be made.

New regional governance arrangements will be implemented in phases to allow councils, and stakeholders adequate time to plan.

How long will consultation take?

The initial consultation period will take three months.

Who are you consulting with?

It is important that there is a strong local voice. All Territorians living in regional and remote communities and outstations can have their say on how to strengthen regional governance.

Engagement officers will be visiting over 70 communities across the Territory to conduct community consultation. All Territorians can have their say about future council arrangements, particularly local community members, councillors, shire employees, land councils, industry sectors and other key community stakeholders.

Key stakeholders such as the local government sector, land councils and industry sectors can also provide written submissions by email or post.

How can I have my say?

There are a number of ways to have your say on options for regional governance, you can:

- attend a public meeting in your local community
- talk with an engagement officer one-on-one when they visit
- provide feedback online at www.yourcouncil.com.au
- send an email to yourcouncil@nt.gov.au
- write to
Regional Governance
GPO Box 4621
DARWIN NT 0801.

Where can I find out more?

Find out more by talking to an engagement officer or visit www.yourcouncil.com.au.