

INFORMATION SHEET

Role of the Local Government Division

The Local Government Division of the Department of Housing and Community Development is responsible for promoting and supporting a strong and sustainable local government sector in the Northern Territory.

One of the Department's roles is to develop the strength and capacity of the Northern Territory local government sector by supporting regional, shire and municipal councils to provide legitimate representation, effective governance, improved service delivery and sustainable development.

The Department, on behalf of the Minister for Housing and Community Development, is responsible for the administration of the *Local Government Act* (the Act), which establishes a system of local government in the Northern Territory. Among other things, the Act provides a framework for the administration and financial management of local government councils and for the scrutiny of their affairs.

Council Support

The Department has officers located across the Northern Territory who provide support and assistance to councils, and where relevant to local authorities and council committees. The role of the Department is to support the council to comply with the Act and to provide information such as advising when they can apply for local government grants.

Local Government Grants

The Department manages a range of local government grant programs. In 2017-18, the Department has a budget of just over \$90 million in grants for local government councils and other organisations. This year the Department will be offering Special Purpose Grants and the new Strategic Local Government Infrastructure grant.

Compliance Reviews

The Department administers a program of compliance reviews, as required under the Act, to ensure councils conduct their business lawfully. All councils are subject to a compliance review once every three to four years. Compliance reviews are undertaken by local government inspectors. If any instances of non-compliance with the Act are identified during reviews, the Department works closely with councils to rectify these matters. When the Department reviews councils, it is required to report the results of the compliance review to elected members and, in some circumstances, to the Minister.

The Department also monitors councils' reporting to ensure they follow the requirements of the Act such as declaring rates, finalising budgets and regional, municipal or shire plans by 31 July each year and ensuring councils' adopted annual reports and audited financial statements are submitted to the Department by 15 November each year.