

APPENDIX 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Local Boards

Role of local Boards

Local Boards are the voice of the communities in the shire and are essential for strong regional local government. They promote grass roots leadership and allow residents to have a say in making policies and plans that affect them, as well as a local service delivery. Using their local knowledge they can

- Advise the Council on service delivery plans and local infrastructure needs;
- Help develop shire plans and regional management plans;
- Advise Council on new and emerging issues and advice on how to deal with them
- Advise on any projects and policies that affect the community or region;
- Make sure Council considers the needs of the community or region;
- Advise Council staff implementation of shire plans
- Initiate, organise or take part in project activities in areas such as community events, women's young people's issue, community safety, community clean up, community infrastructure development planning

Functions of Local Boards

The Local Government Act says local Boards have the following functions:

- Involve local communities in anything to do with local government
- Make sure local communities have a voice in anything to do with local government
- Make sure they have a say about policies that affect them
- Take community views back to council and speak for the community
- Help to make regional management and shire plans

Local Boards Policy

Council has developed a local Boards Policy to set down how it wants boards to work and to be supported. It can be found at www.centraldesert.nt.gov.au and will be reviewed regularly.

Status and Structure

Councils will:

- Give administrative support to Local Boards;
- Make proposals developed with Local Boards a part of shire plans; and
- Report to communities through their Local Boards on service outcomes.
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A network of Local Boards appointed by Council gives communities in the Shire a chance to have a say about issues that affect them.

Appointments will be made for a maximum period of two years. Members may serve more than one term.

Communication with Other Levels of Government

Every year, Indigenous representatives of Local Boards from across the Northern Territory will be invited to a Governance Conference and meet with members of the Chief Minister's Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council.

Support

Council staff will give secretarial and other support to the board, as well as offer an induction and ongoing professional development.

The CEO or his delegate will report at Local Board meetings on local service delivery and on outcomes of advice from the Board.

Composition of Board

A Local Board is made up of:

- No More than 12 nominated members (unless Council decides other wise). Half should be female. It should reflect the make up of local community and will be appointed on the basis of their capacity to contribute to the effective functioning of the board.
- Councillors are automatically members of all local boards in their ward.
- The President can attend all local board meetings but does not have a vote.

Officers and meeting Procedures

The Local Board decides whether to choose a permanent Chairperson and deputy Chairperson from amongst its members, or to have a rotating Chairperson.

Meetings do not need to follow formal meeting procedures. However, minutes need to reflect the time and date of the meeting, who attended, what business was dealt with and all recommendations and decisions. Decisions need to be made by majority vote.

- Local Board meetings are open to the public
- The Chairperson may seek the views of community members and invite to them to take part in the meeting
- The Code of Conduct can apply to Local Board meetings if members agree
- Local Boards can make their own "Working well together Agreements" and protocols for visitors
- The Chairperson will summarise the views of the meeting and make sure they are recorded
- A formal decision or recommendation may be by majority vote of member's present at a meeting
- Decisions or recommendations made by a local board will be summarised in a report to be given to the CEO at least three weeks before Council meeting
- These reports and any management responses will be included in the business papers of each Council meeting
- Decisions or recommendations made by a Local Board are not binding on the Council
- Local Boards will meet every second month
- Local Boards may establish sub-committees and ask residents to help with projects and activities.

Communication

The local board will communicate its recommendations or decisions to residents in appropriate and effective ways, for example through community meetings, using local languages or plain English on notice boards or radio broadcasts. Community meetings can be called by anyone at any time and determine their own procedures. Local boards can advise Council about decisions from community meetings.

Council will accept deputations from Local Boards and other interested groups at Council meetings, to put a particular point of view or argue a case for a particular action.

Councillors will attend Local board meetings in their Wards to

- Report back from Council meetings, particularly on decisions in response to Local Boards reports
- Ask for feed back from Local board members
- Involve Local Boards in Shire planning and policy making.
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Reimbursement of Expenses

Board members are community volunteers. They don't receive any payment but CEO will reimburse them for out of pocket expenses incurred on official Council business if it has been agreed beforehand.

Financial delegations

A Council may delegate responsibilities to a Local Board, however it shall not delegate the power to declare a rate, borrow money, enter into contracts or incur expenditure for amounts exceeding that previously determined by the Council.

Review of Terms of Reference

Local Boards may review these terms of reference within two years of the establishment of the Board and may recommend changes to Council.

2. More Consultation/Communication Mechanisms

Public Council Meetings

Council meetings are open to the public. Any permits stopping the public from travelling to a council (or Local Board) meeting in the shire will be waived under an agreement with the Central Land Council.

Deputations and petitions to Council

Council will accept formal deputations and petitions from Local Boards and any other resident group at Council meetings to give their views about something or ask Council to make or support an action.

Council Committees and Stakeholder Forums

Council can form Council committees, for example an Economic Development Advisory Committee. Committee members can be people who are not Councillors and who do not live in the shire. Under the Act Council committees can have many functions. Council can give an executive committee the power to carry out functions of the council. Council controls and directs all Council Committees. A Council committee can make up its own procedures as long as they do not clash with Local Government Act and Council agrees to them.