Working towards a strong and sustainable Local Government

Shires Financial Sustainability Review Taskforce announced

Local Government Minister, Malarndirri McCarthy today announced a nine-member taskforce to oversee the implementation of the 32 recommendations outlined in the Deloitte Shire Sustainability Review.

The Taskforce will be co-chaired by Mr Tony Jack, Mayor of the Roper Gulf Shire Council and Ms Barb Shaw, President of the Barkly Shire Council. Other members include:

- Mr Damien Ryan, President, Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
- Ms Olga Havnen, NT Coordinator General for Remote Services
- Mr Brian Gleeson, Australian Government Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services
- Ms Margaret Reynolds, Chair Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government
- Mr Ronald Lami Lami, local board member from Minjilang
- Ms Roslyn Frith, local board member from Kalkarindji
- Mr Ken Davies, Chief Executive, Department Housing, Local Government, Regional Services

The Taskforce will meet monthly and provide advice to the Minister for Local Government on the emerging issues facing shire councils.

“The Taskforce will provide appropriate independence, supervision and expertise in implementing the remedial actions as identified in the report,” said Minister McCarthy.

“There’s a lot to get through so over the next six months the Taskforce’s immediate job is to focus on the urgent remedial actions followed by a longer timeframe on the less urgent recommendations.

“To achieve effective and efficient delivery of local government services in a financially sustainable way a coordinated and collaborative approach by all governments is required.”

Have your say in strengthening Local Boards

Minister McCarthy also released a discussion paper, *Strong Local Boards, Strong Shire Councils*, calling for public feedback on strengthening Local Boards and their roles in shire councils.
“Local government reform in 2008 included provisions to enable shire councils to establish Local Boards as an important element of council engagement with local communities,” she said.

“Local Boards enable local participation and are most effective and highly valued when they are seen to be contributing actively to shire decision making.”

“The Territory Government has been listening to shire residents who want increased community engagement with their shires, and this Discussion Paper seeks direct input from them on how to strengthen their Local Boards.”

“The Government is conscious that different shires and different towns and communities within the one shire, may have different views on how local community engagement can be maximised.”

Public forums will commence in September 2012 and will be held in as many shire service centres as possible over a three month consultation.

**Closing the Gap Grants**

To assist with this process Minister McCarthy also announced $1.6M in Closing the Gap grants for governance and infrastructure projects.

“The grants provide $1.6 million in funding to shire councils to help Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage for governance and infrastructure projects,” said Minister McCarthy.

“In 2011/12 the Closing the Gap governance grants pool has been split equally between the eight major shires to ensure the development of a strategic approach to strengthening governance capacity through the local boards.”

Closing the Gap grants are available to support local governments to deliver community projects and construction of infrastructure.

The next round of Closing the Gap grants will be made available later this year. All shire councils with a majority of Indigenous constituents are eligible to apply and letters seeking applications will be sent to those eligible councils in early August.

Closing the Gap is the Territory’s Indigenous generational plan, aimed at closing the gap in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians.

**Attachment:** A complete list of Closing the Gap Grants.

For more information and to view the discussion paper seeking public feedback visit [www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au](http://www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au)

For more information on the Shire Financial Sustainability Review Taskforce and to view the Terms of Reference visit [www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au](http://www.localgovernment.nt.gov.au)

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