24 January, 2013

Introducing regional councils is one option being considered for the Northern Territory among a range of proposed changes to local government.

Local Government Minister Adam Giles said a 21-member Regional Governance Working Group had reviewed the functions and performance of shires and councils in developing proposals to improve local government in regional and remote communities.

“The shire councils created in July 2008 made some progress across some issues, although in most cases, they failed to recognise the input of their community members,” Mr Giles said.

“The draft options paper, being discussed today by stakeholders from across the Territory, outlines five models of governance for local communities.

“Once the paper is finalised the options will be taken to communities for further discussion and comment over the coming months.”

“Any new local government model or models that are recommended through the consultation process will also be considered in driving the way forward for regional governance.”

Mr Giles said he was determined to rebuild local decision-making and re-engaging communities with their local government body.

“The appropriate structure to provide strong regional governance may differ depending on the location,” Mr Giles said.

“What is important is that the model(s) implemented must be appropriate, must be understood and accepted by the community.

“We need to strike a balance between local government models that link with local people and have cultural authority and with organisations that can deliver efficient and effective services.

“There are many points of view about local government and this government is keen to see the evidence of what is working and what is not. Nonetheless, it is clear that we need to change the way local government is going about its business.

It is planned to have the finalised options paper completed by the end of February. Territory-wide consultations will take place in the first half of the year.

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