MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO GET AN EXTRA $5M IN FUNDING

3 April 2014

The Country Liberals Government will provide local government in the Territory with an extra $5 million in annual funding.

The additional funds will be earmarked for the new local authorities created when the Giles Government abolished Labor’s shire councils.

Addressing the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) Annual General Meeting in Katherine this morning, Local Government Minister Dave Tollner said it was important the new local authorities were able to undertake local projects.

“Local authorities fundamentally represent what this Government’s reforms are all about – returning a voice to the local level,” Mr Tollner said.

The local authorities operate under powers devolved to them by the larger regional council.

Mr Tollner said it was vital the new local authorities were respected and listened to by the regional councils, but most importantly, local authorities need money.

“Money they can spend without needing approval by a regional council,” he said.

“The extra $5 million I have announced today will be distributed to regional councils based on the number of local authorities in the area. The Grants Commission is currently investigating the best and fairest formula for doing that.”

Mr Tollner also paved the way for local government in the Territory to have greater self-management through a proposed new agreement with LGANT.

“The Country Liberals Government is keen to enable local government to essentially manage itself,” Mr Tollner said.

“In particular the Government is offering LGANT the opportunity to take on greater responsibilities in recognition that local government does not need the Territory Government looking over its shoulder.

“We want to strengthen the role played by LGANT by allowing it to assume a number of functions carried out by the Department of Local Government.
“While the Department will still take the lead in policy development and high-level compliance matters, this proposal allows local government to set its own agenda and have more control over issues that affect its ability to deliver value for ratepayers,” he said.

The Minister and Damien Ryan, Chairman of LGANT signed a statement of intent at the meeting, paving the way for more detailed negotiations.

The Government will now negotiate with LGANT to identify functions, and appropriate funding that could be transferred to LGANT through a service delivery agreement.

Mr Tollner said he believed the innovative approach will create an environment where local government can operate with maximum efficiency.

“Most importantly, it can take a far more significant role in managing itself rather than reporting back to government on such a regular basis,” Mr Tollner said.

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