New West Daly Council restores local voice

4 July 2014

The Territory Government has restored the local voice to the Wadeye, Peppimenarti and Palumpa region with the creation of the new West Daly Regional Council.

The Minister for Local Government, Dave Tollner swore in the new councillors at a ceremony in Peppimenarti today.

The new council delivers on a 2012 election commitment by the Country Liberals to establish a regional council and allow a strong voice for the people in the West Daly region and provide better services for local people.

Mr Tollner said he was delighted to be able to deliver people in the communities of Wadeye, Peppimenarti and Palumpa a greater say in their own affairs through the new council, which covers 14,000 square kilometres and has a population of more than 3000.

“It is a historic day for the West Daly. They now have much greater say in how services in their local community are delivered. Local control and engagement are key strengths of local government and the Country Liberals are delighted to return this to the West Daly,” he said.

The Chief Minister, Member for Daly Gary Higgins and Minister Tollner met clan groups late last year who made it clear that they wanted a stronger voice and greater control over delivery of services.

Less than 12 months after that meeting, under the guidance of a representative Transition Committee, a new council has been created to address the concerns raised by community members.

Member for Daly, Gary Higgins, who called the nominations for Mayor and Deputy Mayor, welcomed the formation of the new council.

“The new West Daly Regional Council will go a long way towards repairing the damage done by Labor’s centralised approach to local government and I’m delighted to have worked with the Transition Committee to bring about this new council,” Mr Higgins said.

The West Daly Regional Council is part of the Country Liberals reforms of local government following the abolition of Labor’s toxic shires.
The Department of Local Government undertook nearly 280 consultation meetings across the Territory discussing the best way to return to local control of local government.

Mr Tollner said there was no greater example of returning local voice than the new council.

“This exercise has also been a model of cooperation with stakeholders and the existing Victoria Daly Regional Council working closely on issues such as new boundaries, staff, office locations and how the transfer would take place.”

The Transition Committee included representatives from the new and continuing council areas, the Local Government Association of the NT, the NT and Australian Governments and the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, MLA.

The Transition Committee, who deliberated over more than 50 recommendations over a six month period, recommended the appointment of councillors to the new council, who were previously representing their local communities on Victoria Daly Regional Council. The councillors will continue till the next general election due in March 2016.

Mr Tollner said it is expected there will be a progressive settling in period for the new council over the first 12 months.

“This will be supported and closely monitored by the Department of Local Government and Regions to ensure administrative support and assistance is provided where needed. I was very pleased that all service delivery staff in the region agreed to transfer to the new council, and that the transition process was managed very cooperatively with the continuing Victoria Daly Regional Council.”

Mr Higgins said he had every confidence the new council would be up to the task.

“We have had a very thorough process leading up to the formation of the new council and I’m confident the communities of Wadeye, Peppimenarti and Palumpawill soon start seeing the benefits of now having more control over their local services and needs,” Mr Higgins said.

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