Strong progress is being made regarding operational and financial management issues facing the Tiwi Islands Local Government.

Local Government Minister John Ah Kit told Parliament today the establishment of the new Tiwi Islands Local Government arrangements in July last year has been accompanied by significant problems, not least of which was that people were being pushed too fast without adequate financial and operational details being bedded down.

But Mr Ah Kit said the desire of TILG members to make the new organisation has remained strong.

He said Tiwi Islanders instigated remedial action to resolve operational and financial management problems.

"At times those problems led to severe cash flow difficulties at individual community management level, such as with the Bathurst Island Housing Association. These have now been largely resolved," Mr Ah Kit said.

"I have met with members of the TILG executive, the local member Marion Scrymgour and the new CEO John Cleary. It is clear there are still problems to be overcome, but good progress is being made."

Mr Ah Kit said chartered accountants Nair and Watkins were appointed as Grant Controllers in February.

He said the firm has since been able to establish the accounts to the end of March this year and has been contracted to provide annual financial reporting for the current financial year.

"The Grant Controller has also been able to address financial compliance issues relating to ATSIC And my department," Mr Ah Kit said.

"Just as importantly, community management boards now have access to regular financial reporting data.

"The role of the community management boards will be critical, especially as a training ground for Tiwi Islanders as they move towards taking over from non-Indigenous administrators.

"A number of Tiwi Islanders have partly completed local government training through the Tiwi Education and Training Board."

Mr Ah Kit said a planned review of the TILG will begin in July and draft terms of reference are being developed by the department in consultation with Mr Cleary and other stakeholders.

"The review is expected to cover areas such as structural, financial and administrative arrangements as well as staffing roles and arrangements."

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Strong progress on Tiwi Islands local government operational and financial issues

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