many voices, one dream, building a quality desert lifestyle

SHIRE PLAN
2011 - 2015

MacDonnell Shire

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CONTENTS

OUR SHIRE

Situated in an arid desert environment at the centre of the Australian continent, MacDonnell Shire features many iconic, panoramic landscapes which are easily accessed from Alice Springs. The picturesque swimming holes, magnificent flora and fauna, captivating mountain ranges with changing hues and red desert sands are reasons why the MacDonnell Shire is uniquely beautiful and has a deep and powerful strength that can only be felt when travelling across the land.
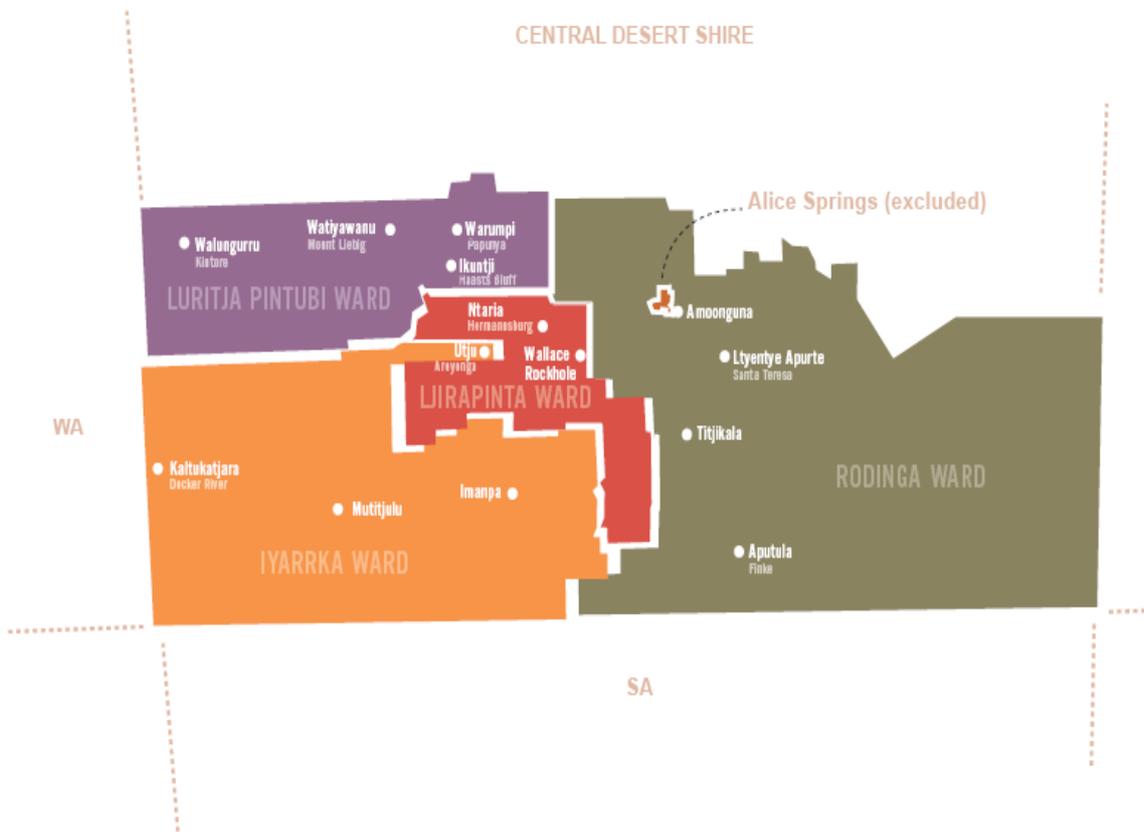
MacDonnell Shire Council officially commenced operations on 1st July 2008. Formed as a result of the Northern Territory Government's Local Government Reforms, MacDonnell Shire covers the southern portion of the Northern Territory and has a land mass of 268,887km^2.

Located within the Shire are 13 major remote communities, many outstations as well as numerous established and emerging enterprises in the pastoral, tourism and mining industries. The towns of Alice Springs and Yulara are excluded from the Shire. The total estimated population of MacDonnell Shire is 6,600 (based on the 2006 Census Data and Northern Territory Government formula to calculate population figures).

As part of the reform process the residents of 13 major remote communities located within the MacDonnell Shire are provided with a range of local government and other services by the Council. These communities include:

• Amoonguna
• Utju / Areyonga

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- Kaltukatjara / Docker River
- Aputula / Finke
- Ikuntji / Haasts Bluff
- Ntaria / Hermannsburg
- Walungurru / Kintore
- Imanpa
- Warumpi / Papunya
- Titjikala
- Wallace Rockhole
- Watiyawanu / Mt Liebig
- Santa Teresa / Ltyentye Apurte

OUR HISTORY AND CULTURE

Prior to the Northern Territory Government's Local Government Reform process, there were some 63 community government councils and associations dispersed throughout the Northern Territory delivering core local government services. These incorporated local government bodies were dissolved on June 30, 2008 under the Local Government Act 2008.

In October 2008, the first elections of the new Shires were held throughout the Northern Territory under the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations. Each Shire had to elect 12 Councillors for their respective Shire Councils and in the MacDonnell Shire the 12 elected Councillors are all Indigenous. MacDonnell Shire has now been operating for three years.

Through the reform process MacDonnell Shire Council is committed to creating a strong future for all of its residents. The administration of governance, finance, funding arrangements, program management and human resources is undertaken centrally at Council Headquarters. The Northern Territory Government has provided the Shire Councils with business systems and communications technology and through consultation and negotiation with Federal and Territory Government funding bodies, the Shire has negotiated funding arrangements to align with the new Shire model.

To date the MacDonnell Shire Council has successfully attracted funding from the Australian and Territory Governments, and is a stronger political voice to advocate on behalf of its residents. As a third tier of Government, MacDonnell Shire Council will continue to talk directly to all levels of Government on a range of policies and funding issues relative to local government core and non core services bringing the Northern Territory in line with other States and Territories.

MacDonnell Shire area is unique, expansive, multilingual and culturally diverse. MacDonnell Shire Council places respect for cultural diversity at the heart of its operations, and Council is committed to bringing Indigenous governance and Western governance systems together in a meaningful and respectful way.

The 13 major communities in MacDonnell Shire have populations made up primarily of Indigenous Australians. Outside of these communities there are numerous pastoral, mining and tourism businesses that are owned and operated primarily by non-Indigenous Australians.

There are four main Indigenous language groups spoken in the MacDonnell Shire which include Luritja, Pintubi, Pitjantjatjarra and Arrente. For some residents, Warlpiri is also spoken, and English is almost always a second or third language.

Indigenous people have had their own culturally based governance systems for tens of thousands of years – with their own leaders, laws, traditions, rules, structures and traditional land ownership (Di Smith 2008, CDO Workshop). The western governance system is a relatively new form of governance for Indigenous people in Central Australia. After the granting of Northern Territory self-government in 1978, remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia underwent major changes to begin governing their communities in a traditional Australian Local Government context. There were major issues related to governance and service delivery as a result of these changes, and the key principles of western governance often competed with the key principles of Indigenous governance.

Having a Shire Council that currently (July 2011) has full Indigenous representation, elected by residents of the Shire, provides an opportunity for the MacDonnell Shire Council to bring Indigenous and non Indigenous cultures together by building social relationships and cohesion in a way that has never been achieved before. Through effective two-way communication and good governance principles and practices, MacDonnell Shire Council aims to achieve a respectful Shire that celebrates its unique cross-cultural diversity.
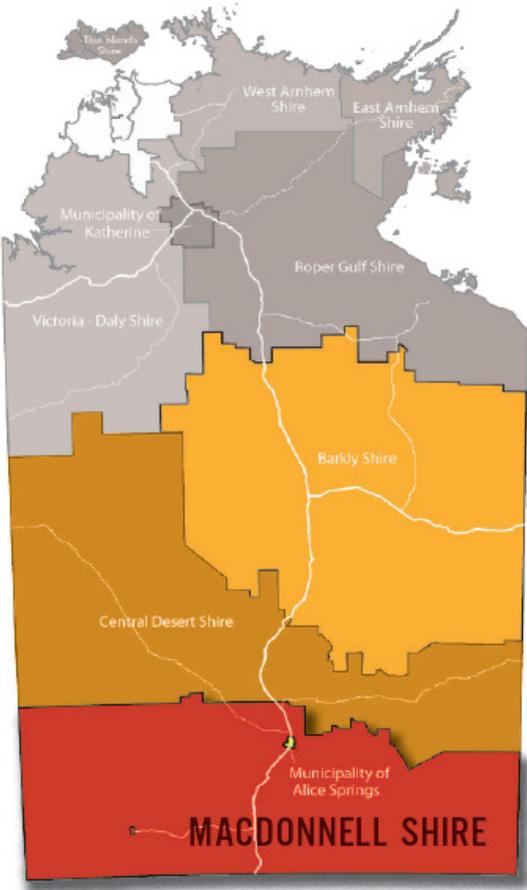
MacDonnell Shire forms part of the Central Australian region, and is part of the Local Government Regional Management Plan for central Australia released in August 2008.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

SID ANDERSON

To be part of the first MacDonnell Shire Council means that all people in the Shire have been part of an historical change for Local Government in the Northern Territory – Shire residents, Shire Councillors and Shire staff.

This change has been a time of confusion for a lot of Shire residents, but for all Councillors it has also been a time of rapid learning from the day we were announced as the first elected members of the MacDonnell Shire.

Remote indigenous towns in Central Australia are no strangers to change, but these changes have often not brought positive long term benefits for our people.

As Councillors we have a lot of combined governance experience through being members of former Community Government Councils, Central Land Council or other similar boards and bodies, but the Shire system of governance was something new for us all to understand.

As a Council we are slowly beginning to see the opportunities the Shire system brings for positive long term change and development for all people.

We are able to see this because we are now learning how to work together to make decisions in the best interests of all Shire residents – not just people in our own communities or people in our families.

Through making strong decisions we will ensure that no town or resident is left behind – that we have a strong united voice so that everyone has access to improved service delivery, long term developments and opportunities.

The 13 Local Boards in the Shire give Council access to a local voice when making our decisions. Our Local Boards also give local people an opportunity to communicate their problems and feedback to Council, and to be part of the long term planning process for their towns. The MacDonnell Shire Council's Local Boards will form a key part of the success of our Shire in the years to come.

So as we move together into the future, we as Councillors are committed to meeting challenges and continuing to work together to shape a sustainable future for all residents in our Shire.

SID ANDERSON
MacDonnell Shire President

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

DIANE HOOD (Acting)

MacDonnell Shire has a clear vision of "Many voices, one dream, building a quality desert lifestyle" combined with a mission to improve the lives of Shire residents. We are here to add value to our Shire community, improve the outcomes of a diverse range of programs and services and operate in a sustainable and caring manner.

Our vision, objectives, goals and measures, budget and organisation chart all align to achieve results within our communities and throughout the Shire. This Shire Plan provides a framework to inform our decision-making in relation to setting priorities and making the best allocation of finite resources.

Our planning process is an ongoing one, with many avenues to gain input from our stakeholders. These include: resolutions of the Council, Local Board meetings and the resulting action lists, individual and group representations from Shire residents, other stakeholders and interested parties. We also receive input from regulation, discussions with other government levels concerning programs and funding needs and participation in local government organisations.

We are now three years old and still operate in a highly dynamic environment. The Shire Council is embracing its broad obligations and developing a culture of strong commitment to the Shire community.

This Shire Plan embraces all these elements and provides a roadmap for this financial year as well as a longer term path to achieve our aim of delivering excellent and sustainable local government services in remote locations.

Diane Hood
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

INTRODUCING THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

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SECTION 1: LONG TERM STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR VISION

Ngkitja Ntjarra, Tnangkarra Nyinta; Wangka Tjuta, Tjukurpa Kutju

"*Many voices, one dream, building a quality desert lifestyle*"

OUR MISSION

To improve the lives of Shire residents by delivering excellent local government services in remote communities.

OUR VALUES

Our values define the manner in which we will work to carry out our mission. We will be:

Open • We will listen to one another, share ideas and welcome input from all people.
Respectful • We will respect and support our diverse cultures and heritage.
Accountable • Our governance and management processes must be transparent and accountable to the residents in whose interests we will work.
Inclusive • We will value and incorporate local knowledge, experience and perspectives into the work that we do.
Innovative • We will constantly strive to improve the services we deliver and the outcomes we achieve.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our strategic goals support our statutory obligations and the requirements of the Regional Plan. These goals will be pursued during the life of this plan and are reviewed annually to ensure continuing clarity and relevance.

GOALS
TO ACHIEVE:

OBJECTIVES
BY PROVIDING:

01

Economic Development

A dynamic and growing economy with strong local employment

- Enhanced employment opportunities in remote communities.
- Skilled and experienced local people building community capacity.
- Productive partnerships with all stakeholders

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

KPI	Measure	Baseline
1. Improve financial sustainability (addressing skills, capacity, partnerships) (a) Reduce the dependency on government grants (b) Deliver a surplus to the organisation (c) Move towards a goal of 2:1 (current) assets to liabilities RESPONSIBLE: Director, Corporate Services	Income of grants as a % of total income $838,693 Improve from baseline towards goal of 2:1	87% (April 2011) ($3.5 million) 2009_2010 TBC 2010_2011 TBC
2. Increased community employment RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Number of staff directly engaged at the communities	433 (June 2011)
3. Rollout Operations Manual for service delivery RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Establish benchmarks for service delivery Operations Manual published	New initiative

	GOALS TO ACHIEVE:	OBJECTIVES BY PROVIDING:

02

Environment

A Shire that respects, protects and nurtures its natural and built environment

- Clean and attractive communities
- Efficient waste management
- Effective use of energy and water resources

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

KPI	Measure	Baseline
1. Maintain clean and attractive communities RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Qualitative – visual attractiveness of communities using before and after photographs	photos from each community taken April to June 2011
2. Improve waste management through increased number of waste disposal activities RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Visual Inspection reports for each community evidencing effective waste management within each community – minimum 2 waste collections per week; increase wheelie bins when and where required.	< 2 per week of waste pick-ups / Minimum of 1 wheelie bin per property within each community.
3. Improve Service Quality as per SLAs to an average rating of "4" on the performance assessment from Power & Water RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Performance indicators (SLAs) agreed within the Power & Water contractual agreement	"3.5" rating on the annual Power & Water contract performance assessment
4. Implement energy and water resource for efficiency / sustainability measures for MacDonnell Shire properties RESPONSIBLE: Director, Technical Services	Reduce energy and water resource usage by 5%.	April – June 2011 energy and water bills.

Community Life

03

A supportive, safe and healthy social environment

- Remote community access to public services
- A safe community
- Family well-being is promoted
- Youth development
- Indigenous culture and heritage is supported

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

KPI	Measure	Baseline
1. Maintain level of community services within the communities and increase where possible RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Maintain all services and additional programs for the year: a) 5 New Holiday Programs per community – 4 times a year b) Certificate III training in 5 communities across the shire	Table on next page
2. Develop community based action plans for specific needs RESPONSIBLE: Director, Service Delivery	Action plan for each community to be developed and adopted by Council by 30th September, 2011 Implement action plans by 30th June, 2012	New initiative

Community	A/guna	Utju	Dkr/Rvr	Finke	Ikuntji	Ntaria	Imanpa	Kintore	Mt/L	Papunya	S/Teresa	Titjik	W R/H
Population	362	245	311	240	165	600	217	350	252	342	?	265	107
Workforce	16	27	22	31	30	32	24	27	23	29	19	43	10
Distance from A/S	21km	240km	670km	434km	250km	130km	200km	530km	325km	240km	85km	130km	120km
Dirt Road Distance		90km	190km	159km	110km	2km	5km	390km	185km	100km	68km	120km	20km
Municipal Works	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
ESO		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Tenancy Management	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Housing R&M	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Airstrip		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Stores	√												
Animal Control	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Out Stations			√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	
Power		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	
Water		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sewerage	√	√	half	√		√	√	√		√	√		
Pools		√						√			√		
Centrelink	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Night Patrol	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Aged Care	√	√	√		√	√	√			√		√	
Childcare		√	√	√	√	√		√	√			√	
School Nutrition		√		√	√		√					√	
Sport & Rec		√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	
ASC/Vac Care		√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Libraries											√		

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04

Council Organisation and Management Environment

Effective and inspiring governance, strong participation and voice, and high quality provision supported by sound management practice.

- Representative Council and Local Boards
- A high standard of professional management and administration
- Responsible management of financial resources
- A professional and motivated workforce in a supportive environment
- Responsible management of Council assets
- Effective use of business systems and technology

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

KPI	Measure	Baseline
1. Improved Staff Morale RESPONSIBLE: CEO	Reduced Staff turnover (number of staff resigning) Implement mentoring program	433 (to mid June 2011) New initiative
2. Improved financial management – Implement Finance Committee RESPONSIBLE: Director, Corporate Services	Bi-monthly council meeting reports and Bi-monthly (alternate month) meeting of finance committee on financial health and status of Shire.	New initiative
3. Implement all required policies and procedures – HR, Accounting, OH&S, Information Technology RESPONSIBLE: Director, Corporate Services	All drafts developed and published by September 30th, 2011 All approved by Council and published by November 30th, 2011 Staff training for all required policies and procedures completed by March 31st, 2012	New initiative

SECTION 2: SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

In delivering local government services under this Shire Plan, the Shire Council is organised into the following functional service groups:

- **Core Services (Service Delivery)** – includes our 13 Service Delivery Centres, waste management, animal control, parks and open spaces, cemeteries, outstations delivery of other contracted services.
- **Property Services** – includes Tenancy, Repairs and Maintenance and housing management; both core business and Territory Housing contracts.
- **Fleet and Commercial Services** – includes management of the Shire fleet, plant and equipment assets as well as commercial services such as the Amoonguna Store, Postal Agencies contract and the Power and Water contract.
- **Infrastructure and Civil Works** – includes roads and traffic management
- **Agency Services** – specialist non-mandatory services delivered on behalf of agencies of the Commonwealth Government and Northern Territory Government; for example Aged Care, Youth Development, Community Safety and Child Care.
- **Corporate Services** – functions necessary to fulfil the Shire Council's governance, administrative, managerial and support requirements; including Shire engagement.

These functional service groups match to the Shire organisation chart set out in Appendix 3.

During the financial year 2011_2012, the Shire Council will undertake the following strategies and actions to deliver local government services in alignment with its stated mission, objectives, goals and statutory obligations. The Shire Council's capacity for delivering the strategies and actions set out below is dependent on funding from the Commonwealth and Territory governments. Much of what needs to be done, especially in the areas of economic development and environmental management, will require special-purpose funding over and above the base funding received by the Shire Council. These considerations are included in the Shire budget set out against the same functional service groups in Appendix 1.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

CORE SERVICES (SERVICE DELIVERY) ACTIONS
RESPONSIBLE: Area Managers, Director Service Delivery (#6)
STRATEGIES: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITY LIFE, ORGANISATION and MANAGEMENT**

1. Provide quality Park & Garden facilities for every shire community

    Actions: - Define a specific Park area for each (13) communities before 31/12/2011
                - Establish MacDonnell Shire Council (MSC) standards for parks and garden facilities
                - Develop the facility up to these standards before 31/12/2011
                - Develop and measure quality improvement through evidenced imagery for 13 Communities

2. Provide a High quality Cemetery service

   Actions: - Develop (by 31/12/2011) and maintain (ongoing) a cemetery register for every community
               - Establish MSC standards for cemeteries.
               - Bring cemeteries up to these standards in terms of space / area appearance for all the
                 13 communities before 31/12/2011

3. Establish and monitor an effective Animal Control Program

   Actions: - Document an Animal Control Plan for MSC by 30/09/2011 and execute across communities
               - Implement the Animal Control Plan for the identified federal growth towns (Ntaria); finalise plan by
                 30/09/2011 then ongoing
               - Ensure appropriate staffing 1FTE by 31/12/2011 for Ntaria and appropriate staffing and/or
                 contractors across other communities (ongoing)
               - Ensure scheduled visits by the Vet to every community (ongoing)

4. Deliver Outstation services as per grant guidelines

   Actions: - Deliver municipal services as per grant – with a monthly review
               - Ensure weekly waste management plan is closely adhered to (with a weekly monitoring system
                 to be put in place before 31/12/2011)
               - Ensure consistent visits by the Vet (a support monitoring and reporting system in place 31/12/2011)
               - Ensure collection of rents within specified dates

5. Act as an effective service delivery agent

   Actions: - Deliver services on behalf of the multiple agencies as per MoU & external contractual SLAs /
                 standards

6. Develop and establish a viable business model that would closely monitor, report and improve service delivery

   Actions: - Successfully develop the model and adopt the same through the council by 30/09/2011
               - Recruit suitable personnel to implement the model by 31/12/2011
               - Run a community feedback instrument prior to the review of the model before 30/06/2012
               - Meet financial targets determined by the model (ongoing)

PROPERTY SERVICES ACTIONS
RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Property and Tenancy
STRATEGIES: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY LIFE**

1. Management of the NT Housing property contracts.

   Actions: - Meet all SLAs as per contracts (ongoing)
               - Achieve $7.5 million income for the Shire
               - Timely invoicing of all work conducted under the contracts (ongoing)

2. Efficient Maintenance of the Shire Property Assets

   Actions: - All properties to be audited once per annum (before 30/06/2012)
               - Meet property benchmark standards at NT housing property audit standards

3. Develop and deliver an effective Housing Management Program (HMP) as per NT government Standards

    Actions: - Develop (completed) and seek proposal agreement from NT Government
                  - Communication and program launch by 30/09/2011
                  - Recruit as per the approved proposal required additional FTEs by 31st December, 2011
                  - Improved tenancy quality feedback as per the proposed milestones in conjunction with the
                    Service Delivery group (ongoing)

4. Efficient Project Management of property management / refurbishment projects

    Actions: - Complete all existing projects from 2010/11 within prescribed deadlines set (for 2011)
                  - Successful scoping and delivery on at least 2 fresh projects deemed as immediate Shire
                    requirement for the year 2011/12

5. Develop a plan for property access for the Shire after the close of the current five year lease arrangement, working with N.T. Government as required, by 30/06/2012.

FLEET AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES ACTIONS
RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Fleet & Commercial Operations
STRATEGIES: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY LIFE**

1. Undertake and deliver a highly efficient Energy and Water Services for all 13 communities

    Actions: - Meet all specified SLAs within the Power and Water Contract
                  - Minimise penalty rates by 50% in comparison to the year 2010/11
                  - Identify at least 1 additional relief ESO- FTE per community (existing works team - indigenous)

2. Establish a consolidated position for Heavy Duty Plant

    Actions: - Full & complete economic assessment of all Shire heavy plant and establish long-term
                    Viability by 30/09/2011
                  - Develop an alternative model based on the results from the above assessment by
                    31/12.2011
                  - Reports prepared and tabled to council for consideration before 30th March, 2012

3. Deliver an appropriate Emergency Management program for the council

    Actions: - Complete the MSC Emergency Management Plan (in collaboration with LGANT) by
                    30/09/2011. Table for MSC – ELT for approval
                  - Roll-out of the program to Service Delivery Centres via workshops by 31/12/2011

4. Establish a Carbon Tax solution

    Actions: - Monitor closely developments of the carbon tax legislative requirements and report on a
                    quarterly basis
                  - Identify the impact of the carbon tax on the existing fleet
                  - Prepare and deliver council report by the 30/03/2012
                  - Establish policies, procedures and records / reporting in accordance with the legislative requirements
                    By 30/06/2012

5. Manage Shire Fleet assets in the most effective manner

Actions: - Review the existing fleet plan and modify areas that require changes by 30/09/2011
          - Identify opportunities for improvement in fleet utilisation and implement by 31/12/2011

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CIVIL WORKS
RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Infrastructure and Civil Works
STRATEGIES: **ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITY LIFE**

1. Maintain and Improve the 1700km road network

    Actions: - Consistently maintain a backlog list (on-going)
              - Maintain minor works schedule (on-going)
              - Establish a viable support structure that supports and encourages civil works team involvement in project delivery by 31/12/2011.
              - Complete the following projects (a) Upgrade Flood-ways by 30/09/2011; (b) spray seal works by 31/12/2011; and (c) local traffic area management (within specified communities) by 31/03/2012.

2. Maintain a high standard of leisure facilities: swimming pools

    Actions: - Remote management of the 3 swimming pools (ongoing)
              - Undertake major repair work to the pools by 31/12/2011
              - Engage contractor for twice yearly servicing, inspection and training (Q2, Q4)
              - Liaise with Agency services to seek funding for pools (on-going)

3. Provide an efficient Landfill operations at the 13 communities

    Actions: - Roll-out MacDonnell Shire Waste Management plan between 1/10/2011 – 31/12/2011
              - Monitor and inspect waste facilities across the 13 communities (on-going)
              - Identify landfills that require rehabilitation by 30/09/2011and action by 31/03/2012
              - Provide support to Shire Service Management to reach minimum standards by 30th March 2012.

AGENCY SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE: Executive Manager, Agency Services
STRATEGIES: **COMMUNITY LIFE**

1. Evaluate and strengthen quality of service delivery

    Actions: - Evaluate service delivery in accordance with national quality standards in aged care, children's services and youth services by 31/12/11
              - Establish quality improvement plans for aged care, children's services and youth services by 31/3/12 and implement (ongoing)

2. Foster positive and collaborative stakeholder relationships. Ensure a "one-team" approach.

    Actions: - Establish internal stakeholder frameworks for every team reflecting working

relationships and actions, by 31/12/2011

3. Ensure a Need Based quality Service is delivered

Actions: - Evaluate existing service levels / satisfaction index by 31/12/2011
                 - Enhance a service model that is responsive to the above and in line with the
                    Government objectives (ongoing)

CORPORATE SERVICES ACTIONS
STRATEGIES: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION and MANAGEMENT**

1. Document, publish and train staff on all required Human Resources and OH&S policies and procedures.
RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Human Resources

Actions: - All drafts developed and published by 30/09/2011
                      - All approved by Council and published by 30/11/2011
                      - Staff training for all required policies and procedures completed by 31/03/ 2012

2. Document, publish and train staff on computer usage policies and procedures.
RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Information Services

Actions: - All drafts developed and published by 30/09/2011
                      - All approved by Council and published by 30/11/2011
                      - Staff training for all required policies and procedures completed by 31/03/ 2012

3. Document, publish and train staff on Accounting Manual policies and procedures.
RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Finance Operations and Manager, Finance Accounting

Actions: - All drafts developed and published by 30/09/2011
                      - All approved by Council and published by 30/11/2011
                      - Staff training for all required policies and procedures completed by 31/03/2012

4. Increase good news stories in press and other publications about the Shire, its activities and successes.
RESPONSIBLE: Communications Officer

Actions: - Minimum of 4 positive stories a quarter published in the press and the production of a
                       Shire progress report quarterly.
                      - Annual report to be finalised by 15/10/2011 and to focus on achievements and
                         success stories in the Shire.

5. Uphold governance practices in compliance with regulations and consistent with best practice.
RESPONSIBLE: Governance Officer

Actions: - All meeting agendas and minutes to be published within time lines and with contents
                       as prescribed by the Local Government Act. (ongoing)
                      - Provide updated training to staff and Council members on code of Conduct, Conflict
                         of Interest and other relevant governance regulations twice a year (minimum).

6. Design and rollout financial reporting for internal and Council meetings.
    RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Finance and Accounting

    Actions: - Determine additional financial indicators to be used by 31/07/2011
                 - Design reports for different meeting types by 31/07/2011
                 - Produce and use in meetings (ongoing)

7. Develop (by 31/12/2011) and rollout (by 31/03/2012) Learning and Development Strategic Plan across the organisation
    RESPONSIBLE: Manager, Human Resources

SECTION 3: PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 THE MOST RECENT ASSESSMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act and the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations, Council prepared a draft paper in October 2010 which was issued to stakeholders for discussion, including NTEC, and was subsequently adopted by the Council at the Ordinary Council meeting of 17th February 2011..

The MacDonnell Shire Council S23(2) Review of Representation is attached in Appendix 4 and gives an assessment of the effectiveness of constitutional arrangements for electoral representation of the council area (electoral review) in accordance with the requirements of Section 23(1)(c) and 23(2) of the Local Government Act and Regulations 63 of the Local Government Electoral Regulations to determine whether the arrangements presently in force provide the most effective representation possible.

As a result of the review, Council determined that there would be no change to electoral boundaries or representation at this time.

3.2 OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

While the creation of the Shires by the Northern Territory Government has given rise to a number of opportunities for improved local government service delivery, this is not without significant threats and uncertainties for the longer term future and sustainability of the current model.

The key opportunities and challenges in relation to the Shire's capacity to deliver its mandated services during the current planning cycle are:

OPPORTUNITIES

The creation of the Shires by the Northern Territory Government and other policy changes impacting upon the residents of the Shire have created a number of opportunities for local government service delivery in the bush, including:

- A coordinated approach to funding and program management for remote communities.
- The simplification of funding arrangements for remote desert communities by means of aggregation into Shire based funding rather than fragmented community-based funding.
- The introduction of multi-year block funding as is the norm for local government in other parts of Australia.
- Greater efficiency in the use and management of capital equipment.
- Employment opportunities for community members at above-award rates of pay and conditions.
- Strategic alliances with training organisations to provide valuable vocational skills to indigenous employees.
- The professionalisation of management and administration.
- An enhanced capacity to speak with a strong, united voice in the political arena.
- The introduction of business management systems and processes to support efficiency gains and service quality.
- Improved purchasing power and other economies of scale.

CHALLENGES

The social, economic and political environment under which the Council operates gives rise to a number of challenges, including:

- The sustainability of the Shire is dependent upon stable, long term grant funding arrangements with the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government. Changes in these arrangements and the policies which drive them have the potential to disrupt the Shire's capacity to deliver core services and agency services to the communities. It is noted that during the current planning cycle there will be at least one Federal elections and one Northern Territory election. It is also noted, that as a total, grant funding has been decreasing year on year.

- With the move to some services being provided under a Service Level Agreement (contract) as compared to a grant, there is increased reliance on the Shire's ability to process the workload. Administrative and logistical solutions have proven difficult to implement due to access to skilled resources.

- The Shire Council provides services in communities situated on Aboriginal freehold land held by land trusts. In relation to the NTER the Federal Government obtained five year leases over the communities. Under the terms of an Administrative Authority granted to the Shire by FaHCSIA in 2008, the Shire Council occupies and uses a number of buildings and facilities in the communities. This gives rise to significant risks:
    o Availability risk – there is no certainty that these assets will continue to be available for occupancy and use by the Shire Council after the termination of the five year leases.
    o Economic risk - there is no certainty that funding will be available to pay for commercial rents and other outgoings that may become payable for the assets after the termination of the five year leases

- The Shire has a very low level of untied funding. This seriously constrains the ability of Elected Councillors and management to set priorities and initiate action. This limits the capacity for the Council to make a material difference to the lives of residents and places the Shire at a material disadvantage compared with local government in other parts of Australia.

- The Shire has a very low rates base. At the present time, revenues from rates, fees and charges from the Shire's 268,000 square kilometres of land cover barely 2% of the Shire's budgeted expenditure on core services and support services. Most of the land in the Shire is exempt Land Trusts or conditionally rateable pastoral leases.

- Some departments / grant providers will not consider paying an administrative fee that will cover MacDonnell Shire's overheads and costs in the provision of a service. This means that MacDonnell Shire either must cover these costs or not provide the service. Given MacDonnell Shire's low ratepayer base and the low level of untied funding, this issue is likely to emerge more strongly over this planning period.

- The Shire continues to experience difficulty in filling all vacant positions in the communities and at head office. The Shire's capacity to consistently deliver high quality services depends upon the recruitment and retention of capable, motivated staff at all levels. A key success factor for staff recruitment and retention is the availability and quality of staff housing.
- The size of the Shire and the distances between communities poses a significant challenge in the delivery of local government services. The unsealed roads to many of the communities are prone to damage and disruption in adverse weather conditions. IT solutions are varied in their availability in different communities.

3.3 POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE REGULATORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Shire Council periodically reviews its regulatory and administrative framework to ensure:

- Ongoing compliance with applicable laws
- Practicality
- Cultural appropriateness.

Changes in the organisation structure, budget categories and matching of objectives to those same categories and organisation structure are being implemented in 2011/12 to provide better focus on our objectives and action plans and to improve the effectiveness of administration and service delivery.

It should also be noted that a general election for MacDonnell Shire Council is planned for this reporting period, specifically 24th March 2012. Council has resolved that the election be run by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

3.4 POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

The Shire Council has identified training and development as a strategically important issue for improving service delivery. Accordingly, relevant training organisations and institutions are being researched with a view to entering into one or more strategic alliances. The nature of such a relationship will be dependent upon the magnitude and sustainability of suitable funding from government.

MacDonnell Shire Council is also investigating models to provide improvements to workflow and logistics. The goal is to provide for greater throughput of jobs under contracts and therefore to increase local employment at the communities and to save money which can be re-directed to providing increased Shire services. Tightened business controls across the communities should also assist with this improvement.

It is intended to develop an action plan for each community and this has been included as a Key Performance Indicator under our goal of **Community Life**.

The Northern Territory government has advanced the concept of a Single Government Shopfront in the growth towns. While further discussions need to occur as plans are developed, this may provide further opportunities for improving service delivery both for MacDonnell Shire and the wider government agencies.

many voices, one dream, building a quality desert lifestyle

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