



STOP PRESS



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PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

COOMALIE COUNCIL TO EXPLORE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MODEL WITH BELYUEN COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT COUNCIL (INCLUDING LITCHFIELD NATIONAL PARK)

RESOLUTION 17/10/2017/012

That the Coomalie Community Government Council confirms its commitment to

1. pursue the building of a stronger rural local government model in the region;
 - and
 2. to work cooperatively with Councils in developing options that allows for a stronger rural local government model to be established in the region; with the following process being put forward to the Belyuen Community Government Council for its consideration.
- That terms of reference for a working group will be developed focusing on Belyuen Shire Council, Litchfield National Park and Coomalie Shire Council.
 - Terms of reference should contain a timeframe that allows for sufficient consultation with all Councillors.
 - The membership of the working group will be made up of;
 1. The President and up to two elected members of each Council
 2. The CEO of each Council
 3. NTG representative from Dept of Housing and Community Development (Rolf Nilsson)
 4. NTG representative providing secretariat services and support (Charlie Fuller)
 5. Chair to be shared between:
 - a. President Coomalie Community Government Council/President Belyuen Community Council
 - or in the absence of either of the above the;
 - b. With the support of the Executive Director (Local Government Branch DHCD)
 6. Second staff as may be required at the determination of the Working Group.
 - That the intention is, subject to agreement of the Belyuen Community Council and Northern Territory Government to proceed with consultations by the end of 2017 so that options for local government can be considered by the Councils early in 2018 or another date as suitable to the Councils.
 - That Coomalie Council pursue an appropriate consultation process with electors/ratepayers to ensure they remain informed on progress and a final position.
 - If there is agreement to proceed, the proposed date for any new model is suggested as at 1st July, 2018 or another date as suitable to the Councils.
 - That the Council write to the Minister seeking support for the proposal and an agreement to fund the process sufficiently, so that there is no financial liability incurred by Coomalie ratepayers in relation to the creation of a larger, expanded Council. (The range of costs to be considered include but are not limited to staffing, vehicles, consultation, travel and related expenses, new corporate, strategic or operational and financial staff and systems, defraying unanticipated costs of the merger.)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



Summary

The following is the decision of Council from its May 2012 meeting.

Moved Clr. Turner, Seconded Clr. Crook that Boundary Consultation/Expansion be a standing item on the Council agenda until resolved. Council supports making this a priority for Council.

July 2014

The NT Government published a notice in the Government Gazette on 3 July 2014 which includes the Robin Falls area in the Coomalie Community Government Council area.

February 2015

The Ombudsman found that Council does not have a case to answer in relation to the process to incorporate the Robin Falls area into the Council area.

June 2015

A meeting of the BCWLGAG was held at Belyuen on Tuesday 9 June 2015. The main discussion revolved around the incorporation of the remaining unincorporated areas into Councils.

December 2015

The Department of Local Government provided a background briefing for Councillors on the remaining unincorporated areas. The Territorian published a brief article on the proposal on Sunday 6th December 2015 making comment about the proposal.

January 2016

Letter sent to Department of Local Government requesting Litchfield National Park be included in the Coomalie Community Government Council area.

February 2016

The Department of Local Government have advised that there will be no further decisions made in relation to formation of new Councils in this term of Government. **The Department has acknowledged Council's request in relation to Litchfield National Park.**

May 2016

A meeting was held of the BCWLGAG. There was a discussion regarding the three councils working together in

developing a strategy to put to the Government in relation to their future and the unincorporated land.

June 2016

Department of Local Government and Community Services were advised of Council's agreement to investigate the formation of a regional council subject to Batchelor being the administrative centre.

July 2016

Three consultants were invited to quote on the scope of works to provide an analysis of options for local government structures in the area. Two quotes were received. An application was submitted for a Special Purpose Grant to proceed with the consultancy.

August 2016

The Council received an email on Tuesday 9th of August from the Department of Local Government advising that the Special Purpose Grant to provide an analysis of options for Local Government structures in the area has been granted.

September 2016

Consultants have been engaged and anticipate the review will take approximately 6 weeks.

October 2016

The President and the CEO met with the consultant's representative on Monday 26th September 2016. The discussion revolved around Councils preferred options for a new Regional Council. The consultant was advised that **council's preferred option was to progressively identify areas which relate to the current Council and incorporate them into the Council.**

November 2016

The Consultants met with BCWLGAG on 9 November 2016 for an update and work shop. Council representatives presented varying views of the future and there was no consensus of a preferred direction for the future. The major points were that the consultants should focus on the current Council and perhaps comment on aligning the rural parts of Lichfield Council with any new entity. Marrakai area was excluded from the current discussion. The current Belyuen stalemate should be resolved by the next election. The Government needs to lead the process for incorporation of the unincorporated lands. The timeframe is probably 5 to 9 years.

December 2016

Council resolved the following in relation to the consultant's report

That Council formally adopt its position as outlined below: **progressively improve Council's sustainability through efficiencies, resource sharing and continued review of service levels.** This also includes seeking additional income sources when appropriate elective expansion of the Shire area to include areas which are naturally serviced by Council ensure Batchelor remains the centre of administration for the Council support NT Government initiatives that achieve the goals identified previously.

That Council advise that the Department of Housing and Community Development that it believes there will be little progress in the incorporation of unincorporated land unless there is long term commitment from the political arm of Government.

January 2017

Wagait Council has requested that Coomalie and Belyuen Council's give permission for the Consultant's report to be made available publically on Council's website.

February 2017

A meeting of the Councils and the Division of Local Government has been arranged for Monday 20th February 2017.

May 2017

The meeting discussed the merits of the report prepared by the consultants titled Working Together- A way forward.

The meeting agreed to receive and note the report, however they believe that the report did not adequately explore the options raised by the Councils and was basically a restatement of the options explored in 2011/12.

In particular, the meeting agreed the following points:

The report does not reflect the views of the three Councils combined, or any one of the three councils.

The report does not discuss the preferred options of the three councils.

The issues relating to the unincorporated lands remains with the Northern Territory Government and the land owners.

The three councils investigate opportunities to undertake planned sharing of services.

The three councils continue to work with the Northern

Territory Government on constructive options to address the development of Local Government in the top end.

It was requested that the individual Councils discuss and agree on the 5 points outlined.

Resource Sharing

It was agreed that the CEOs would meet regularly to discuss and investigate resource sharing opportunities with the three councils. This will be separate to the BCWL-GAG.

The group could also investigate opportunities to contract to the Northern Territory Government some services currently provided to the unincorporated areas.

It was suggested that initially the group should meet bi-monthly and the first meeting to be held at a suitable date in the first full week of March 2017.

July/August 2017

Executive Director Department of local Government – Lee Williams and Rolf Nilson met with the Council President and CEO to flag potential staged rural council expansion in the Top End. CEO was requested to develop concept and provide estimates if required, using work untaken in 2015. Two further meetings held by the CEO with Department staff to develop the concept and cost analysis.

September 2017

The President summarised for the new Council the reason for the standing order; Amalgamation review and current NT Government position with an expanded rural Council option.

October 2017

October 10th 2017 - Executive Director Department of local Government – Lee Williams and Rolf Nilsson special presentation to Councillors on the history of previous years' amalgamation proposals and potential for Coomalie, Litchfield National Park, Belyuen model to be considered.

October OGM confirms Coomalie Councils position via formal resolution and summarised by the following purpose statement.

"That the Coomalie Community Government Council confirms its commitment to

- 1. pursue the building of a stronger rural local government model in the region and*
- 2. to work cooperatively with Councils in developing options that allows for a stronger rural local government model to be established in the region; with the following process being put forward to the Belyuen Community Government Council for its consideration."*



ABOUT COOMALIE

(extract from annual report 2016-2017)

The Coomalie Community Government Council was approved by the NT Government in 1990, and held its first election on 2nd May 1991.

The Coomalie Region is part of the greater Darwin Region and the area encompasses the well serviced townships of Batchelor and Adelaide River, and the rural communities including Lake Bennett and Robin Falls. In 2015 the Minister for Local Government gazetted the expansion of Coomalie Shire to include the Robin Falls locality. Robin Falls locality is south of Adelaide River on both sides of Dorat Road and has added 400km² to the Shire. The total Council area is 2056km² and has an estimated population of around 1,319 residents (as per 2016 Census).

The industry base of the Coomalie Region is increasing in its diversity, having moved from a heavy reliance on the pastoral and mining sectors to now include education, tourism, aviation and horticulture as major sectors of the local economy. Service industries to these major industry sectors are also developing within the region. The Coomalie Region is a significant tourist destination with high visitation rates, Batchelor being the gateway to Litchfield National Park and Adelaide River the headquarters during WWII after the bombing of Darwin. The region is steeped in history from early Chinese market gardens, use as a base during the Second World War, and mining.

The original inhabitants of the Coomalie Region were Aborigines of the Kungarakan, Awara and Warai groups. The first European activity in the region was recorded in 1860 when members of George Goyder's survey expedition undertook extensive surveys in the north of Australia.

The vision of the Coomalie Community Government Council is to sustain and nurture the growth of the lifestyle and quality of life of residents and visitors. This will be achieved through improvements to economic, cultural and ecological opportunities and will work on creating an involved and supportive community, promoting investment, ensuring accessibility and capitalising on our natural advantages with an emphasis on sustainability.

ABOUT BELYUEN

(extract from annual report 2015-2016)

The Belyuen community is located on the eastern side of Cox Peninsula, approximately 20km south of Mandorah. It is 128 km by road from Darwin and 110 km from Batchelor.

The community has a population of approximately 190 people from seven language groups: Emmi, Wadigin, Kiuk, Malak Malak, Marriamu and Maranunggu.

Belyuen Community Government Council strives to:

- Improve the lifestyle and quality of life of the residents of Belyuen and;
- Involve the community in decisions that affect their lives.

A high priority for Council is employment and training of local people. A high quality aged care and home and community care program has been in place for many years. Belyuen strive to try and increase services to aged residents. The Council operates a mechanical workshop and essential services program. Belyuen Council also operates a general store / retail outlet that employs community people.

LITCHFIELD NATIONAL PARK

Litchfield National Park, covering approximately 1500 km², is near the township of Batchelor, 100 km south-west of Darwin, in the Northern Territory of Australia. Each year the park attracts over 260,000 visitors.

Proclaimed a national park in 1986, it is named after Frederick Henry Litchfield, a Territory pioneer, who explored areas of the Northern Territory from Escape Cliffs on the Timor Sea to the Daly River in 1864.