

Media Release

New path forward for Central Darling Shire Council

Monday, 22 July 2024

The NSW Government will introduce a new council model that will set Central Darling Shire up for a more sustainable future and return democracy to remote communities in far west NSW for the first time in over 10 years.

The state's largest local government area by size, Central Darling Shire Council has been under administration since 2013 due to significant financial and governance issues.

Several factors including the Council's remoteness, small populations and rate base has made it extremely difficult to deliver services and infrastructure in a cost-effective way.

To address these challenges and ensure communities have democratic representation, the NSW Government has developed a new model of governance for the Council.

Central Darling Shire will become a 'Rural and Remote Council' made up of three locally elected councillors from the community and three councillors appointed by the NSW Government with relevant expertise to support the stable and effective operation of the Council.

This model will enable Central Darling Shire Council to better represent the diverse community, streamline costs, and deliver services that meet local needs.

It has been developed in consultation with Central Darling Shire Council administrator Bob Stewart, community representatives, the Member for Barwon, Roy Butler MP and NSW state agencies.

Legislation will be required to amend the Local Government Act to establish this new model and will be introduced to Parliament in the coming months.

To allow for this legislation to pass and the implementation of the new model, the September local government elections have been deferred for Central Darling Shire Council. Elections for the three community representatives will be held in the first half of 2025.

To support the Council through this transition to the new model, the NSW Government has provided a \$477,782 grant. A funding strategy is also being developed to support the financial sustainability of Central Darling Shire Council and enable more certainty to plan and deliver services and infrastructure into the future.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig:

"Central Darling Shire is as big as Tasmania but has a population of fewer than 2,000 residents which places immense pressure on a council to deliver services.

"These unique characteristics make it extremely challenging and costly for the Council to be financially sustainable under the traditional local government model.

"That is why the NSW Government has devised a new form of governance that balances the need for local representation while ensuring the Council can provide for the community in the long-term.

"This new model will give the community a voice but also provide the support required to ensure the Council can source the funds it requires to be sustainable into the future.

“The community has shown great resilience over the years, and I hope this announcement will give the people of Central Darling Shire some clarity about their future.

“I also acknowledge the local member Roy Butler MP for his collaboration with the government to reach this important outcome for his community.”

Quotes attributable to Member for Barwon, Roy Butler MP:

“It’s great news for the Central Darling Shire that the Council will be finally coming out of administration after ten years and returning to having elected councillors.

“This is something that people in the shire have asked for and a lot of effort has been spent on getting it right.

“This has been a model that has been informed by consultation with the community.

“We have been talking with the people of the Central Darling Shire and with the Minister for Local Government about what the return to an elected council might look like and hopefully we have landed on a form of council that will work well, given the unique situation of the Central Darling Shire.

“Councils are the form of government that is closest to the people, the residents of Central Darling Shire need to have some say in how their local government functions.

“I would encourage more people in the shire to take a direct interest in their council. Councils work best in collaboration with, and supported by, the community.

“I really want to thank the Minister, Ron Hoenig, for acting within 15 months of taking office to bring the Council out of administration, in response to my requests, and even changing the legislation to do it.”

A factsheet and FAQ with further information can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/g8kw05mvi03udg3m4vgig/ANWvzViFYRxY4LL14v5wiPw?rlkey=5a prhu2bkuc6fbhfgqnedc7lx&st=nooo8faw&dl=0>

MEDIA:

Clare Dowswell | Minister Hoenig | 0448 540 073