Local Government

Regional Management Plan

July 2012 – June 2016

Central Australian Region

March 2012

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INTRODUCTION

This Local Government Regional Management Plan (RMP) for the Central Australian Region is a statutory instrument under part 3.1 of the *Local Government Act.*
It comes into effect on 1 July 2012 and has a term of 4 years, during which time it can be reviewed.
The local government bodies covered by terms of this plan are:

i)   MacDonnell Shire Council;

ii)   Central Desert Shire Council;

iii)   Barkly Shire Council; and

iv)   Alice Springs Town Council.

The Plan is set out in five sections.

Background provides an overview of legislative requirements of Regional Management Plans.

Section A sets out the opportunities and challenges for local government service delivery in the region.

Section B provides an overview of the regulatory and planning framework for local government in the region.

Section C sets out existing and potential cooperative arrangements between local governments within the region and between local governments and other organisations and agencies with interests in the region.

Section D identifies core local government services and specifies the locations within each shire where core services must be delivered. (This section does not apply to municipal councils).

Background:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

At Part 3.1, section 16 of the *Local Government Act* (the Act) there is a requirement that a Regional Management Plan (RMP) be developed for each of the three regions described in Schedule 1of the Act.

A RMP is primarily the product of consultation between interested councils in a region and the Agency (the department with responsibility to administer the *Act*). In this case the responsible Agency is the Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services (DHLGRS). A municipal council may participate in the consultation regarding the RMP for its region but is not obliged to do so.

The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) may also participate in consultations for each RMP. The Act requires that RMPs address particular matters. They are to include a description of the challenges and opportunities for local government within the region; address the administrative and regulatory framework for local government service delivery; list any existing or potential cooperative arrangements involving local government in the region, either among councils themselves or with other bodies; and, identify core local government services and the communities to which they must be delivered by the shire councils.

The Act specifically provides for an RMP to include the joint management of facilities by councils, such as a regional cemetery or regional waste management facility. Cooperative arrangements, with regards to resource sharing and development at a regional level, are intended to provide service delivery efficiencies, including the benefits of economies of scale. They are also to facilitate engagement with governments and the private sector in the development of the region.

An RMP is to operate for a term of four years, when it is to be replaced by a revised plan. A draft of a new RMP, reflecting the results of consultation, must be published on the Agency's website at least four months before it is due for commencement.

As part of the consultation process a notice is published on the Agency's website and in a newspaper circulating generally throughout the Northern Territory inviting written representations regarding the draft RMP, within a period (at least one month) specified in the notice, from interested persons. The draft plan and the notice inviting written representations must also be published on the website of any council whose area is within the relevant region.

The final version of a RMP is to be published on the Agency's website and relevant council websites.

The Act provides that a plan may be amended by agreement between the Agency and the councils in the region at any time during its term.

The Agency is to report annually to the Minister for Local Government on the performance of councils as measured against the relevant RMP on service delivery. It will discuss the status and outcomes of cooperative arrangements identified in the plan. The report will also provide information on the delivery of core local government services to prescribed communities describing the services being delivered to each community.

The Act requires that the Minister table the Agency's report before the Legislative Assembly within six sitting days after receiving it.

There are three Regional Management Plans that will cover the Northern Region, Big Rivers Region and Central Australian Region of the Northern Territory.

3. THE CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN REGION

The Central Australian region covers Barkly Shire Council, Central Desert Shire Council, MacDonnell Shire Council and Alice Springs Town Council.
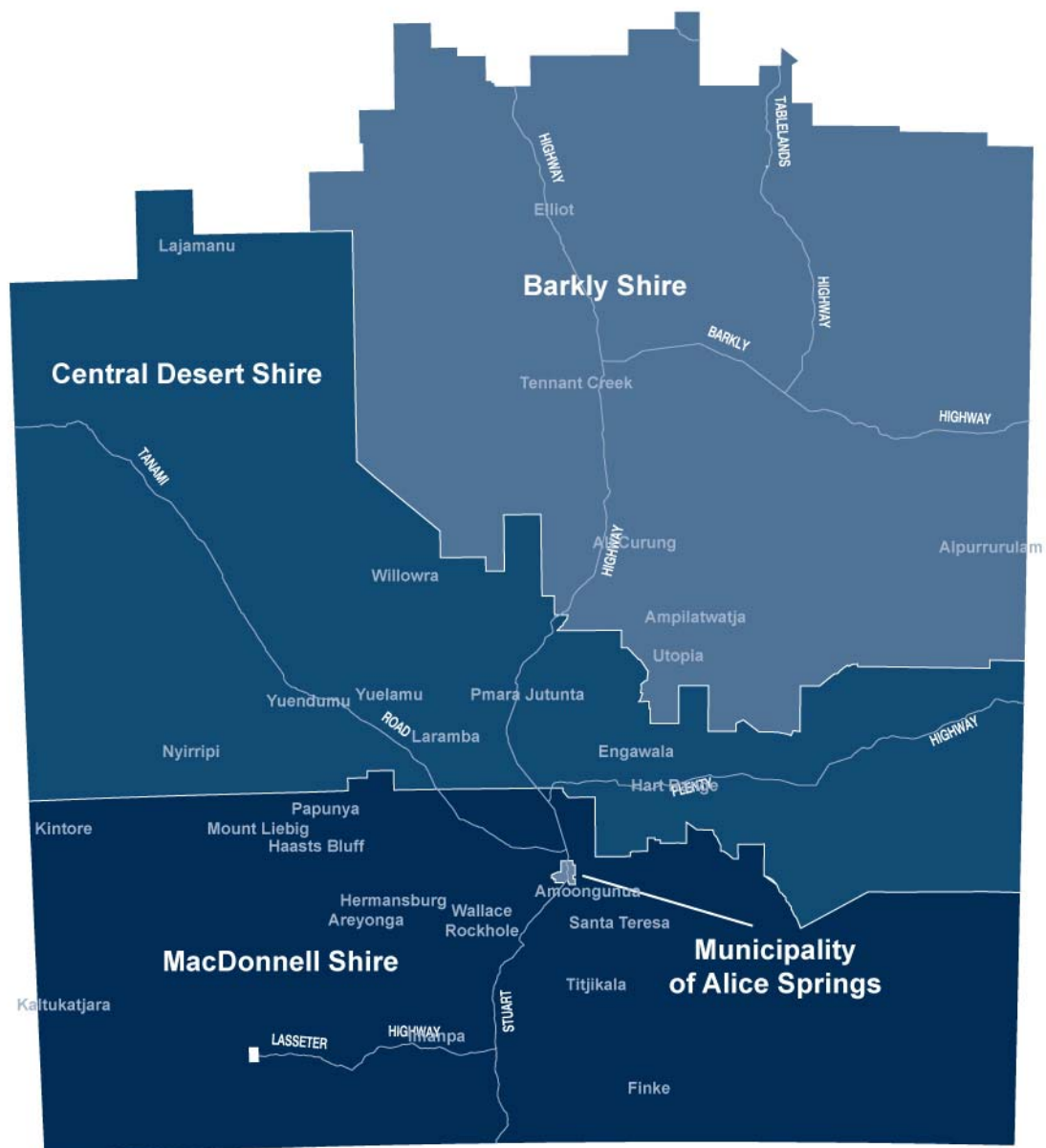
4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGIONAL PROFILE

Local government area

Alice Springs Town Council	327 km^2
MacDonnell Shire	268,887 km^2
Central Desert Shire	282,093 km^2
Barkly Shire	322,514 km^2

Central Australian Region total area   **873,821 km^2**

Population

The population of the areas covered by this Regional Management Plan according to the 2010-2011 Northern Territory Grants Commission are:

Alice Springs Town Council	28,105 (Indigenous 19%)
MacDonnell Shire	7,200 (Indigenous 86%)
Central Desert Shire	4,782 (Indigenous 84%)
Barkly Shire	8,143 (Indigenous 67%)

Central Australian Region total population   **48,230**

Local Roads

Currently, local government is responsible for the management of 14,131km of local roads across the NT. Councils in the Central Australian Region were responsible in 2009-10 for the following road lengths:

Barkly Shire Council	621km
Municipality of Alice Springs	253 km
Central Desert Shire Council	2111 km
MacDonnell Shire Council	1744 km
LGANT Roads	1637 km
Central Australian Region local roads total length	6366 km

Council expenditure

Total local government expenditure in the Central Australian Region in 2009-10 was approximately $68 million. The breakdown of the standardised expenditure for each Council is shown below:

Barkly Shire Council	$13,899,458
Municipality of Alice Springs	$29,915,104
Central Desert Shire Council	$9,659,526
MacDonnell Shire Council	$14,545,824
Central Australian Region Total	**$68,019,912**

SHIRE OPERATIONAL LOCATIONS

MACDONNELL SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	**Finance and administration centre**	**Community service delivery centres**
Alice Springs	Alice Springs	Kaltukatjara (Docker River)
		Imanpa
		Walungurru (Kintore)
		Mutitjulu
		Watiyawanu (Mt Liebig)
		Papunya
		Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff)
		Areyonga
		Ntaria (Hermannsburg)
		Wallace Rockhole
		Amoonguna
		Aputula (Finke)
		Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa)
		Titjikala

CENTRAL DESERT SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	**Finance and administration centre**	**Community service delivery centres**
Alice Springs	Alice Springs	Nyirripi
		Yuendumu
		Lajamanu
		Ti-Tree
		Laramba
		Engawala
		Yuelamu
		Willowra
		Atitjere (Harts Range)

BARKLY SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	**Finance and administration centre**	**Community service delivery centres**
Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek
		Elliott
		Ali Curung
		Ampilatwatja
		Arlparra (Urapuntja homelands)
		Alpurrurulam Wutunugurra

SECTION A: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

The Central Australian Region presents particular challenges and opportunities given the vast area of coverage, the great majority of which is sparsely populated. The region contains two towns, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, over 30 main communities, 107 pastoral properties and many outstations/homelands. Alice Springs has historically been the major service centre for MacDonnell and Central Desert communities. In the Barkly, access to services is through Tennant Creek, Mount Isa (Queensland), and Alice Springs.

With their strategic location and similar service delivery requirements the three shire councils together with the Alice Springs Town Council have the opportunity to enter into cooperative arrangements with regards to facilities and activities of mutual benefit.

CHALLENGES

The shire councils have the challenge of providing a benefit that all residents can participate in, whether they live on communities or outstations; on pastoral properties or towns; run commercial businesses or government funded services. Many of these residents will receive services directly from the Shire; others stand to benefit in the longer term from a stronger and more stable region.

The shires councils have the challenge of delivering services to residents in scattered communities across regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory, sharing different cultural backgrounds and languages, and where, in most cases, people are living in circumstances of severe social and economic disadvantage.

Local governments have the challenge of meeting community expectations for the delivery of an increasing range of services, some of which are not the usual business of local government in other parts of Australia.

The particular **challenges** for the Central Australian Region include:

- Ensuring effective participation and representation of all shire council residents in the affairs of the shires.

- A limited rates and charges base compared to larger urban councils, and yet significant extra service delivery costs due to remoteness.

- Limited availability of funds for core service delivery.

- A lack of all weather road infrastructure to support year round access for residents and industries. The timely and cost effective transport of shire council staff, contractors and materials across the region can at times be a challenge.

- Expensive satellite based telecommunications and IT infrastructure.

- The lack of the equivalent to town plans for remote communities that could provide a guide to infrastructure development in communities.

- Aging or non-existent community facilities that enable residents to be healthy, well-educated, well informed and able to contribute to the growth of the region.

- The need to strengthen services out bush to minimise the need for residents to move to urban areas to access these services.

- The engagement and skill levels of local Indigenous people in local government services, and training for those jobs.

- Recruitment and retention of staff. In particular the national shortage of tradespeople and certain professions (e.g. skilled accountants and engineers) is an even bigger problem in rural and remote areas.

- Ongoing impacts of decisions made by the various levels of Government relating to the Northern Territory Emergency Response and Indigenous policy including homelands.

- Access to sufficient housing for council staff and sub-contractors for major centre and remote based Service Centres and operations.

- Securing ownership or leases of fixed and non-fixed assets essential for the provision of shire services.

- Sharply increasing costs of fuel for transport and power generation.

- Maintaining ageing and damaged physical infrastructure with restricted maintenance funding required to bring it up to standard.

OPPORTUNITIES

Co-operation between local governments in the region will strengthen the ability to lobby and influence government policy, develop service delivery funding submissions and negotiate major projects with public agencies and private interests for the achievement of regional development outcomes. LGANT will have a significant role in advocating on behalf of regions and the Territory as a whole.

The **opportunities** for the Central Australia Region are:

- Sharing of knowledge and policies with a view to the standardization of procedures and service delivery.

- The potential to have a strong Central Australian voice in the Territory and national stage advocating for infrastructure and other improvements that will lead to a stronger region.

- A regional approach to community safety, including Night Patrols, could greatly enhance safety for residents, visitors and tourists in the region.

- Opportunities to establish other regional models of service delivery, from waste management policies and practices to youth, sport and recreation program delivery models.

- Joint approaches to networking, training, and professional support (including Councillor training) can lift the level of service delivery efficiently and effectively.

- Joint training and course provision will enable the required minimum numbers of students to be achieved and thus viability of courses more likely.

- Investigation of a range of insurance options with the view to reducing premiums.

- Investigation of joint procurement of legal and veterinary services.

SECTION B: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGULATORY AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK

1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The *Local Government Act* and its subordinate legislation provide for and regulate local government in the Northern Territory. The Act also provides for Ministerial Guidelines that apply in relation to certain functions of local government.

The Preamble to the Act states that the rights and interests of Indigenous traditional owners, as enshrined in the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976* and the *Native Title Act 1993,* must also be recognised and the delivery of local government services are to be in harmony with those laws.

Various Acts of Parliament of the Northern Territory and the Australian Governments also regulate either the delivery of local government services or other essential community services that the shires may deliver on an agency basis. These Acts and associated Regulations establish compliance requirements which must be observed by local governments.

Northern Territory legislation that may impact on the services being delivered by local governments includes:

- *Cemeteries Act;*
- *Crown Lands Act (Section 79);*
- *Litter Act;*
- *Pounds Act,*
- *Control of Roads Act;*
- *Disasters Act;*
- *Liquor Act;*
- *Kava Management Act;*
- *Community Welfare Act;*
- *Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act;*
- *Disability Services Act;*
- *Weeds Management Act;*
- *Environmental Assessment Act*; and the
- *Fire and Emergency Act.*

Australian Government legislation that may impact on the services being delivered by local governments on an agency basis or through a funding agreement includes:

- *Family and Community Services Act;*
- *Aged Care Act;*
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act;* and the
- *Fair Work Act.*

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Act, at Part 3.2, requires each council to have a municipal or shire plan. This plan is integrally linked with the regional management plan. Together these plans make up the planning framework for local government at the local and regional level.

The municipal or shire plan is to contain a strategic plan, service delivery plan, annual budget and a long term financial plan. These components of the municipal and shire plan are to be informed by community plans endorsed by local boards and by the advice of any other advisory body established by the council to assist its strategic or operational decision making.

The provisions of Part 3.2 of the Act require that a council review and revise its municipal or shire plan before 31 July each year. This enables each council to formally consider its service delivery to the community in the light of any current or emerging challenges and opportunities and whether it has the most appropriate administrative and regulatory framework to achieve its service delivery operations.

A council is also required to develop a set of service delivery performance indicators. These performance indicators are important for council's to assess the standard of service delivery across their service centres.

A municipal or shire plan should include performance indicators and an indicative budget for each core service in each service centre. A report against these performance indicators and indicative budgets should form a critical part of the council's annual report, and consequently inform the council's annual review of its municipal or shire plan.

3. INTER-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE INTER- GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS

The Inter-Government Agreement Establishing Principles to Guide Inter-Government Relations on Local Government Matters (the IGA) was signed in April 2006 by the Australian Government, all State and Territory Governments and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The agreement establishes principles to guide the relationship between the three spheres of government and avoid cost shifting onto local government.

The Northern Territory Government and the Northern Territory Local Government Association (LGANT), through the ALGA, are both parties to this IGA and are committed to abiding by the principles of the IGA in their working relationships.

SECTION C: LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

A cooperative arrangement includes any formal agreement, alliance, memorandum of understanding, joint venture or partnership that contains agreed ways of local government councils working together or working with other agencies and organisations, both public and private, for particular purposes.

1. Existing cooperative arrangements entered into by councils in the Central Australian Region under this Plan

The Headquarters

MacDonnell and Central Desert Shire Councils share headquarters that serve as a focal point for executive management activities.

CEO Meetings

All council and shire Chief Executive Officers meet on a regular basis to discuss implementation of this plan, issues of common interest, and strategic direction.

2. Ways of improving service delivery by cooperation between councils, or between councils and government agencies or other agencies.

The Alice Springs Town Council, Central Desert Shire Council, MacDonnell Shire Council and Barkly Shire Council agree to work together to implement the cooperative arrangement goals described in this plan.

The plan sets out the goals, strategies, outcomes and key performance indicators for a four year period; however they are subject to review and change at any time during this period by agreement by the participating councils.

Management of RMP goals

The Central Australia local governments planned cooperative arrangements will be managed by a regional group comprised of the Chief Executive Officer from each participating council. The RMP regional management group will assume responsibility for ensuring that the cooperative arrangements agreed to in the plan are developed and implemented.

This will include responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the RMP over the four year period commencing in July 2012 and will ensure that participating councils commit to support the development of the goals.

The RMP goals will form part of each local government's shire or municipal plan and will be reported against in the annual reports.

GOAL 1

To enhance regional service delivery by improving technical and engineering services.

Strategies

- A regional infrastructure group will meet quarterly using the LGANT Infrastructure committee with representation from each of the regional local governments.

- The regional infrastructure group will investigate opportunities to improve civil and engineering service at a regional level.

- Develop a scheme between participating councils to share services, technical and engineering resources and infrastructure.

- Develop a cross hiring policy that facilitates sharing of machinery and infrastructure services.

Outcomes

- Improved quality of technical and engineering services are available to all participating local governments.

- Improved access to technical and engineering resources and equipment are available through the development of a cross hire policy.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Joint cross hire policy	Policy developed and published	Annual Reports	Policy established	Narrative explaining the stage of development of the operational policy
Utilisation of technical civil engineering resources and equipment	Resources and equipment shared between local governments each year	Annual Reports	The indicator shows the resources and equipment that have been shared over the year and which local governments have used them	Description of technical and engineering resources that have been shared.

GOAL 2

To maximize educational opportunities for local government employees

Strategies

- Sharing training and education calendars between regional local governments.

- Establish a Training and Employment Committee with representation from each of the regional local governments.

- Develop and implement training and employment agreements between regional local governments.

- Source and procure training providers to deliver training programs

Outcomes

- A joint Training and Employment committee is established
- Educational and training is provided according to need to each local government

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Joint Training and Employment committee	Number of meetings convened each year	Annual Reports	Indicator shows that a joint Training and Employment Committee has been formed and is meeting shared joint training needs.	Narrative and number of meeting held each year
Training session	The number and type of joint training session held	Annual Reports	The indicator shows that local government staff training has been provided according to identified need.	Narrative, type of training and number of training events for each year

GOAL 3

To establish and implement a joint waste management agreement between Regional Local Governments

Strategies

- Jointly identify areas of waste management that cost, compliance and effectiveness can be improved through a regional waste management action plan.

- Develop and implement an agreed Central Australian Regional Waste Management joint agreement.

Outcomes

- Regional waste management agreement
- Joint regional waste management policy
- Improved waste management systems and services

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Regional Waste Management Agreement and projects	Completed plan by 2014	Annual Report	The indicator shows that a Regional Waste Management agreements and projects have been produced.	Reference to plan in annual reports for each year
Improved waste management systems and services	% of targets achieved in action plan for each year	Annual Reports	The indicator shows the progress made towards achieving actions described in the Regional Waste Management Action Plan	% of achievement in annual report

GOAL 4

To Development and implement a Regional Domestic Animal Management Plan

Strategies

- Form a joint Regional Domestic Animal Management Committee.

- Investigate opportunities to develop local government by-laws to promote a consistent regional approach.

- Investigate opportunities for synergies, resources and knowledge sharing for effective domestic animal management.

Outcomes

- Improved domestic animal management through joint planning and resource sharing.

- Jointly developed regional domestic animal by-laws adopted by local governments

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Regional Domestic Animal Management Committee formed	Committee formed	Annual reports	The indicator shows that a Regional Domestic Animal Committee has been formed	Referenced in shire or municipal plan
Consistent domestic animal by-laws	Domestic animal by-laws adopted by local governments	Annual reports	The indicators shows that local governments have adopted a consistent approach to domestic animal by-laws	Referenced in shire or municipal plan of by-laws for each year

3. The status of undertakings set out in the Plan

The status of cooperative undertakings will be reviewed by the Agency (the Department of Housing Local Government and Regional Services), in consultation with the councils within the region, on an annual basis. This review will enable the preparation of the annual report, as required by the Act, to be provided by the Agency to the Minister regarding the performance of councils as measured against this Regional Management Plan.

SECTION D: CORE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND THE LOCATIONS WHERE CORE SERVICES ARE TO BE DELIVERED

NOTE

- Municipal councils are not required to identify core local government services in the RMP, however they provide core local government services to all constituents.

- Communities other than those identified in this section will also receive core local government services. However, this is a matter for decision by each shire and will form part of the shire plan. Local roads, for example, will be maintained throughout the entire shire.

1. Core local government services

Local Infrastructure

Maintenance and upgrade of parks, reserves and open spaces
Maintenance and upgrade of buildings, facilities and fixed assets
Management of cemeteries
Lighting for public safety, including street lighting
Local road upgrading and construction
Local road maintenance
Traffic management on local roads
Fleet, plant and equipment maintenance

Local Environment Health

Waste management (including litter reduction)
Weeds control and fire hazard reduction in and around community areas
Companion animal welfare and control
Environmental support services
Effluent disposal

Local Civic Services

Library services
Local emergency services
Mitigation and recovery services following an emergency

Community Engagement in Local Government

Administration of local laws
Governance: including administration of council meetings, elections and elected member support
Administration of Local Boards, advisory bodies and management committees
Advocacy and representation on local and regional issues

2. Locations where core services must be delivered in the Central Australian Region

Each shire plan must specify the locations where core services will be delivered by shire councils.

Barkly Shire Council
Tennant Creek
Elliott
Ali Curung
Ampilatwatja
Arlparra and the Urapuntja homelands
Alpurrurulam
Wutunugurra
Imangara

MacDonnell Shire Council

Kaltukatjara (Docker River)	Imanpa
Kintore	Mt Liebig
Papunya	Haasts Bluff
Areyonga	Ntaria (Hermannsburg)
Wallace Rockhole	Amoonguna
Aputula (Finke)	Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa)
Titjikala	Mutitjulu (to be confirmed)

Central Desert Shire Council

Nyirripi	Yuendumu
Lajamanu	Ti Tree
Laramba	Engawala
Wilora	Pmara Jutunta
Nturiya	Yuelamu
Willowra	Atitjere (Harts Range)

COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

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Central Desert Shire Council	
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