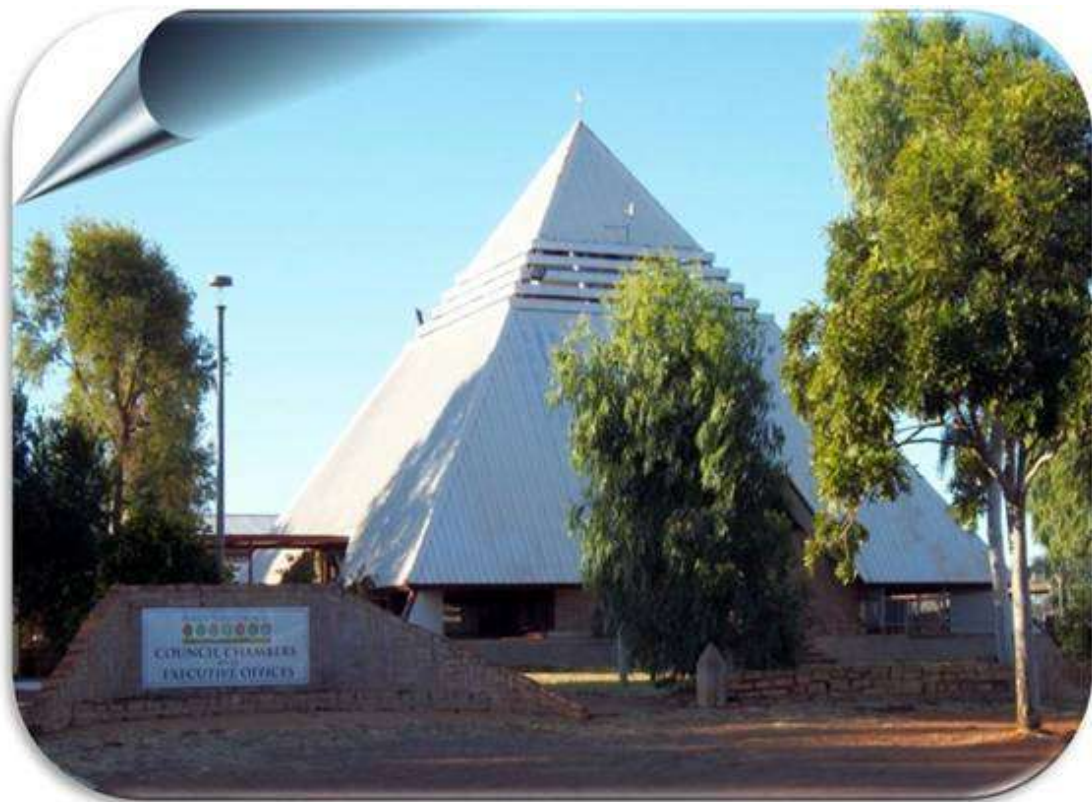


BARKLY SHIRE COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

2010/2011



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Shire President's Message

To me, 2010/11 must be best described as a year of further consolidation for the Barkly Shire. At the commencement there was a major change of senior staff with our original Chief Executive Officer, Jeff Sowiak departing and eventually his replacement in David Shoobridge. During the year the senior management structure was altered to better reflect increasing challenges for the shire.

During the year, major issues began to emerge. Of major concern to Councillors and myself was the urgent need to better engage with all communities especially our major centre of Tennant Creek. There remained a natural distrust of the new shire organisation and the way it was doing business. At the heart of this were the genuine and understood concerns that this new large body involved a group of people making decisions about community centres in another centre many hundreds of kilometres away. Consequently early in the period, the Council made the conscious decision to reinforce and encourage the formation of Local Boards that could effectively transmit the concerns and needs of each community. I am happy to say that by the end of the period, Local Boards had met in each of the main centres of Alpururulam, Ampilatwatja, Arlparra, Ali Curung, Elliott and Wutunugurra.

The Tennant Creek Board was reactivated under the chairmanship of Kevin Diflo. Consequently every community has the opportunity to be engaged with the Shire.

At the outset, a major problem was animal health and control. While this had been carried out for many years at Tennant Creek to a limited degree, health authorities were extremely concerned at the level of animal related injuries presenting to the hospital and local clinics. There was also a strident need in the other communities for an effective, ongoing program. Within some months an Animal Health Program was established that has begun to mature in the latter months of 2011.

A further major endeavour by the shire has been the upgrading of all landfills and effluent disposal areas. This work has been ongoing but much was achieved in the past year. Simultaneously, as the shire began to meet at various communities, Councillors noted the poor state of local facilities such as airstrips and roads compared to other communities especially those in the north.

Roads became a major issue with weeks of almost continuous wet weather almost bringing movement between communities to a halt. Cyclone Yasa swept across northern Queensland in February and resulted in a mass exodus of residents from Alpururulam. The Shire's Night Patrol shepherded them down the Sandover Highway to Ampilatwatja and then onto either Alice Springs or Tennant Creek where makeshift housing was arranged initially with the real assistance of the Shire and Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation in Tennant Creek and later with other agencies. This exercise has raised several questions concerning emergency services and which organisation has the principal responsibility for whom. A further milestone was completed with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between NT Police and the shire.

In closing I would like to recognise the work of not only Council staff but that of the Elected Members. In so doing I especially thank the Deputy President, Cr. Tony

Boulter, who has given selflessly of himself especially in representing the President at a number of forums here within the region and elsewhere. The Councillors have all have worked tirelessly to resolve various issues and to build a local government organisation truly responsive to the needs of the Barkly Region. For this I thank them all.

Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM
PRESIDENT

By the end of the 2010/11 year, the Barkly Shire celebrated its fourth year as a local government for the Barkly area. The period has not been without its problems, mainly in the formation of a large organisation to carry out the work and responsibilities of at least seven smaller bodies.

As with any new organisation teething problems have occurred and in some instances the effects have continued. The main areas of concern have been in financial management, records, assets and communication systems. At the genesis of the shires, a centralised accounting software system, Tech One, was established to facilitate financial management and accounting. This system developed multiple problems of operation especially with regular reconciliation of accounts so that Barkly Shire was unable to achieve an appropriate audit at the end of the financial years. This situation persisted even though the accounting software was replaced with a different system. It is only through determined efforts during 2010/11 these difficulties could begin to be resolved. Agreed opening balances were not available at the commencement of each accounting period which resulted in disclaimed audits being received for 2008/09 and 2009/10.

While there was no evidence or suggestion of financial mismanagement or, even worse, misuse of funds, clear accounting for financial expenditure especially in grant operation, has been extremely difficult. Much work has gone into reversing this unacceptable situation and this is indicated in the 2010/11 audit which although qualified, has not been disclaimed. This situation will be remedied during 2011/12.

Appropriate recording and storage of the accumulated records of all of the former smaller councils, in addition to those of the shire over recent years, has been a major goal of the present administration. Records have been scattered over all communities and a concerted effort is now underway to centralise, cull unnecessary or aged documents and appropriately store records relevant to local government operations within the shire area.

Similarly an Assets Manager has been recruited and an ongoing program to replace aged and failing plant and infrastructure is underway. Grant management has also been greatly improved with establishment of a grant management area which is involved in grant submissions, financial accounting of same and ensuring that appropriate acquittals are achieved.

Perhaps one of the greatest priorities is the strengthening of a team culture throughout the organisation. This is a priority area that must be constantly monitored and promoted. For the shire to work effectively, all Elected Members and staff must work together. Only in this way can the work of the shire be achieved to the satisfaction of member communities. As must be expected, the dissolution of smaller community bodies and formation of a larger body can, and has, led to a feeling by communities of disenfranchisement. Consequently there has been a concerted effort to foster the formation of Local Boards which advise the Shire Council on local issues.

Overall I firmly believe the Barkly Shire system is a positive development in local government within the Barkly Region. However as with any new innovation, it will take some time to establish itself for the benefit of all within the region. It has the potential, and I am confident it will most certainly be, a strong advocate for local community issues and provide effective local government operations for the benefit of all communities it serves.

David Shoobridge
Chief Executive Officer

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY BY SERVICE – 2010/2011

ACTIVITY

SUMMARY

Civic, cultural and all sporting events Council successfully co-ordinated and assisted community events at service centres. These included the Purlapa-Wiri Festival at Ali Curung, various sporting carnivals, NAIDOC Week. An events officer position is based at Tennant Creek working with community staff throughout the shire. Barkly Shire also worked in co-operation with Barkly Regional Arts and other organisations at Tennant Creek and Elliott to promote and assist with major community events including Australia Day and the Desert Harmony Festival.

Library services In conjunction with NT Library Services, libraries were operated at Tennant Creek and Elliott throughout the period. These provided public internet services. The manuscript of a history of Elliott entitled "In the Middle of Everywhere" was completed and will be published during 2012.

IT and communications Telephone services were upgraded at Ali Curung and Elliott and maintained at all other centres. It is intended to extend and upgrade communication abilities at all centres in 2012.

Financial management During 2009, Barkly Shire transferred from the initial software system of Tech One to Authority as provided through the Civica organisation. At that time, the shire was concerned about ongoing system interpretation difficulties that were having a serious detrimental effect on ongoing financial management. However, adoption of the Authority software prior to establishment of agreed opening balances for the period resulted in disclaimed audit reviews for 2008/2009 and 2009/2010. During 2011, the Shire made determined efforts to correct past financial recording deficiencies resulting in a partially qualified audit result for 2010/2011 and an agreed operational budget for the period. All efforts will be made

to

achieve a clear general audit for 2011/2012. A new position of

Grants

Officer was created in Tennant Creek to correlate grant management and seek additional funding for the shire.

Advocacy

of

Local Implementation Plans (LIP) affecting the Territory Growth Towns of

Elliott and Ali Curung. The shire strongly recognises that there should be

community involvement in the LIPs and has facilitated this input. In

all

communities Local Boards have been fostered to ensure local priorities are respected and incorporated where possible in decisions and operations of the shire. The Board at Tennant Creek has been rejuvenated and regular board meetings are held in most communities. Barkly Shire has diligently lobbied with both Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments for replacement of failing septic systems at Ampilatwatja with a more efficient sewerage system.

Records management Creation of the Barkly Shire and dissolution of former smaller Barkly local governments has provided a major problem of record management. The shire has recognised the need to ensure that all relevant records are maintained and efficiently stored and arrangements are underway to achieve this goal.

Asset Management of Asset Asset management is now a priority of the shire and a new position Management has been established.

Animal Health the shire The Shire has embraced an active animal health policy throughout the shire with shire assistance and regular clinics are being established throughout all the larger communities with the assistance of AMRRIC. An active program of animal control has been adopted in Tennant Creek with a demonstrable decrease in the incidence of patients with dog related injuries seeking medical intervention. This program will be furthered throughout 2011/2012 utilising CDEP participation.

Road Maintenance and local traffic management independent has The Barkly Shire continues to manage over 600 kilometres of roads throughout the shire. Additional earthmoving equipment has been procured and a program of making each larger community been undertaken. Speed restrictions have been successfully sought through the Northern Territory Government for local roads in the vicinity of Ali Curung and Elliott.

Waste management been An active program to upgrade landfills throughout the shire has been

commenced and will be continued into 2011/2012. The assistance of the Northern Territory Government has been sought to obtain an appropriate consultancy to consider the future waste management needs of the Tennant Creek community.

Weed control and prevention at fire prevention	This has been ongoing. Emphasis has been placed on fire regional communities with breaks being established, training for local workers and residents being instituted and additional fire fighting equipment procured.
Aged care	HACC services are provided at all shire service centres with the assistance of DEEWA.
School Nutrition	Provision of school nutrition programs continued throughout the period at all centres.
Postal services	Agencies were provided at all shire service centres in accordance with agency agreements with Australia Post.
Centrelink services	Centrelink services were provided at all shire centres in accordance with agency agreements with Centrelink.