

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REGIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN REGION

August 2008

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 2008 (NT).

It comes into effect on 1 July 2008 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
- iv) Alice Springs Town Council

The Plan is set out in five sections.

Background provides an overview of the local government reform.

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.)

It should be noted that this first RMP is relatively rudimentary. During 2009 the Department of Local Government and Housing will be working with Shires, Municipal Councils and government and non-government agencies to examine ways in which plans might be amended to better respond to regional opportunities and challenges.

Background:

1. New Local Government

In October 2006, the Minister for Local Government announced that the Northern Territory Government would introduce a new framework of local government that would involve the incorporation of the vast majority of the Territory. There will be five municipal councils and 11 shire councils.

A detailed Implementation Plan to enable the establishment of the shire councils by 1 July 2008 was adopted and the Government released 'indicative' shire boundaries for public consultation in January 2007.

The Minister established a Local Government Advisory Board, with an independent chair, and provided the Board with terms of reference to advise him directly on all major issues relating to the establishment and operation of the shires, the legislative changes to provide for the reform, and the development of regional management plans.

A Transition Committee was also established for each shire area to enable local input into the shire boundaries, ward boundaries, governance and representative issues and the development of the shire plan. Each current local government council within the area was given membership on the Transition Committee.

Amendments were made to the *Local Government Act* and the *Associations Act* in August 2007 to assist the smooth transition to the new shires. The Minister was provided with the power to make re-structuring orders. Local government bodies that had been incorporated under the *Associations Act* were converted to the *Local Government Act*, while still retaining their corporate identities, funding and assets until 1 July 2008.

The Minister subsequently made re-structuring orders to establish 'prospective' shires and defer council elections by gazettal on 17 October 2007. The transition of the Association councils also occurred by gazettal on the same date.

2. Local Government Act

The new Local Government Act 2008 (the new Act), to provide for the local government reforms, was tabled at the February 2008 Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and passed on 7 May 2008. At Part 3.1, Section 16 of the new Act there is a requirement that a regional management plan (RMP) be developed for each of the three regions described in Schedule 1.

A RMP is primarily the product of consultation between interested councils in the region and between those councils and the Agency (the Department with responsibility to administer the Act). In this case the responsible Agency is the Department of Local Government and Housing (DLGH). 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 new 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 new Act specifically provides for a 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 4 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 4 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 1 month) specified in the notice, from interested persons. The draft regional management plan and the notice inviting written representations must also be published on the website of any councils whose area is within the relevant region.

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

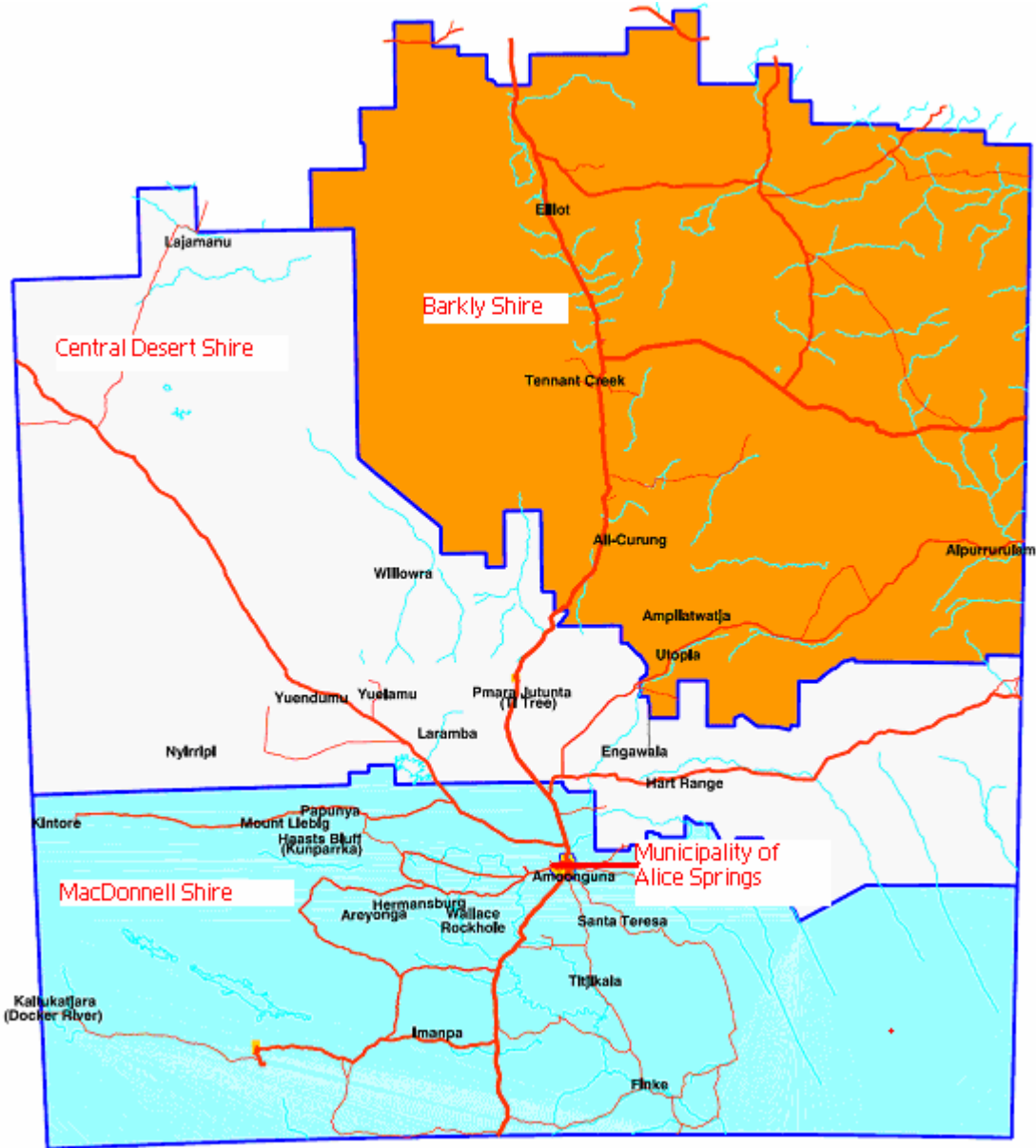
The new Act provides that a Plan may be amended by agreement between the Agency and the councils in the region at any time during its term.

The Agency is to report annually to the Minister for Local Government on the performance of councils as measured against the relevant RMP. The report is to consider the manner in which the councils have responded to the challenges and opportunities for local government in the region. It will discuss the status and outcomes of cooperative arrangements identified in the plan. The report will also comment on the delivery of core local government services to prescribed communities.

The new Act requires that the Minister table the Agency's report before the Legislative Assembly within 6 sitting days after receiving it.

There are 3 Regional Management Plans that will cover the Northern Region, Big Rivers Region and Central Australian Region of the Northern Territory.

3. Map of Central Australian Region



4. Local government regional profile

Local government Area:

This Regional Management Plan covers the Local Government areas of:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Alice Springs Town Council | 327km 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 km²

Population:

The population of the areas covered by this Regional Management Plan are:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| • Alice Springs Town Council | 26,194 | (Indigenous 19%) |
| • MacDonnell Shire | 6,571 | (“ 86%) |
| • Central Desert Shire | 4,591 | (“ 84%) |
| • Barkly Shire | 7,531 | (“ 67%) |

Central Australian Region total population 44,887

Note: The population figures included in this draft are provided on an interim basis pending the release of final ‘estimated resident population’ figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Northern Territory Treasury (NTT) and the Department of Local Government and Housing (DLGH).

Local Roads:

The total length of local roads for which local government in the Northern Territory is responsible will be expanded. Approximately 8,600 km of local roads that would normally be managed by local government will be transferred from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to the Shire Councils in a staged, negotiated manner post 1 July 2008.

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 2006-07 for the following road lengths:

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

Council expenditure:

Total Local Government expenditure in the Central Australian Region in 2005-06 was almost \$84 million. The breakdown of the expenditure for each Council is shown below:

Barkly Shire Council	\$13,960,395
Municipality of Alice Springs	\$34,490,966
Central Desert Shire Council	\$17,258,003
MacDonnell Shire Council	\$18,160,417
Central Australian Region Total	\$ 83,869,781

Shire Operational Locations:

MACDONNELL SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	Finance and Administration Centre	Community Service Delivery Centres
Alice Springs	Alice Springs	Kaltukatjara (Dockar 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	Alice Springs	Tennant Creek
		Elliott
		Ali Curung
		Ampilatwatja
		Urapuntja Outstations
		Alpurrurulam

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. 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 new shires 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 will receive services directly from the Shire; others stand to benefit in the longer term from a stronger and more stable region.

The new Shires 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 residents in the affairs of the new Shires
- A limited rates and charges base compared to larger urban councils, and yet significant extra costs due to remoteness
- A lack of all weather road infrastructure to support year round access for residents and industries. The timely and cost effective transport of Shire staff, contractors and materials across the region can at times be a challenge
- Poor 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

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- The need to strengthen services out bush to minimise the need for residents to move to urban areas to access these services
 - The employment 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 (eg skilled accountants and engineers) is an even bigger problem in rural and remote areas.
 - Unforeseen impacts of decisions made by the Australian Government relating to the Northern Territory Emergency Response
 - 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 physical infrastructure to ensure it remains in good working order.

Opportunities

Cooperation 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.

Specific opportunities for the Central Australian Region include:

- The potential to have a strong Central Australian voice on the Territory and national stage advocating for infrastructure and other improvements that will lead to a stronger region
- The potential to put in place regional, shire and community plans that are driven and monitored using shared technology.
- Joint procurement arrangements (possibly through LGANT) to the local government National Procurement Network have the potential to reduce the high costs of delivering services.
- 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 polices 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 minimum numbers of students to be achieved and viability of courses more likely

SECTION B: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGULATORY AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK

1. Local government legislative context

The *new Local Government Act 2008* and the Local Government Accounting Regulations, Administration Regulations and Electoral Regulations 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 *Local Government Act* states that the rights and interests of Indigenous traditional owners, as enshrined in the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 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 include:

- *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 include:

- *Family and Community Services Act*,
- *Aged Care Act* and the
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act*.

2. Local government planning framework

The new Act, at Part 3.2, requires that each council has 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 new 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 by the new Act to develop a set of service delivery performance indicators so that it can assess whether it is achieving the standards of service delivery identified in the municipal or shire plan. The report of this assessment will form a critical part of the council's annual review of the municipal or shire plan.

The structure of a municipal plan will be in accordance with established council practice. The structure of the shire plan will be as adopted by the prospective shire leading up to the commencement of New Local Government on 1 July 2008.

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 MacDonnell and Central Desert Shire Councils share a Finance and Administration Centre providing financial management services such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, bank reconciliation, financial reporting, payroll, asset and facilities accounting, information and records management and information technology. From time to time, Barkly Shire Council may be supported through this arrangement.

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

MacDonnell and Central Desert Shire Councils have already joined Alice Springs Town Council in strongly supporting the Outback Highway, a road through the heart of the outback from Winton in QLD to Laverton in WA.

Central Desert Shire Council is a partner in the Tanami Regional Partnership Agreement, with other partners being Newmont Mines, and the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

2. Potential cooperative arrangements to be considered during the first term of the Regional Management Plan

Resource Sharing

Resource sharing arrangements could include:

- The formation of a Local Government Regional Management Group by all councils in the region to develop regional approaches to identified priorities and targeted programs.
- The Local Government Regional Management Group could consider developing consistent by-laws and enforcement policies to administer and regulate local laws (and to administer Australian Government (AG) and Northern Territory Government (NTG) legislation where appropriate), including authorised officers operating outside council boundaries

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- The formation of a working group of Directors responsible for corporate services and community services within the region, to provide advice on the implementation of joint procurement opportunities in the areas of banking, insurance, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and business systems and the joint procurement of other goods and services.
 - The development of agreements between the shires and Indigenous service providers, including Resource Centres, for the delivery of services.
 - The development of an appropriate communications system for the efficient conduct of shire business between the shires and Telstra.
 - The development of an agreement between the councils in the region on cross boundary service delivery policy and practice.
 - The negotiation of a regional library service to be operated from the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek public libraries.
 - The development of a regional technical services hub to be established in Tennant Creek and Alice Springs to service all councils.
 - The development of a regional civil works strategy, supported by shared engineering and project management expertise as appropriate, by all Councils.
 - The development of a domestic and industrial regional waste management strategy by all councils.
 - The development of a regional recycling strategy
 - The development of a local government regional sport and recreation facilities management plan by all councils.

Development

Development cooperative opportunities could include:

- The development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Shire Councils and respective Land Councils to clarify roles and responsibilities and set out protocols for cooperation and engagement.
- The development of an agreement between the Shire Councils and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC).
- The development of agreements between the shires and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations (DEEWR), the Department of Education and Training (DET), Charles Darwin University (CDU), Bachelor Institute of Tertiary Education (BITE) and LGANT (either separately or in

combination) on an integrated training and development program for Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees.

- The development of agreements by the Shire Councils for the ongoing support of existing sub-regional Economic Development Plans and the sub-regional Tourism Plans, as appropriate.
- The development of an agreement between the Shire Councils, LGANT and DLGH for a governance training and development program for Councillors and Local Boards.

4. The status of undertakings set out in the Plan

The status of cooperative undertakings will be reviewed by the Agency (the Department of Local Government and Housing), 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 MUST BE DELIVERED

Note: (i) Municipal Councils are not required to identify core local government services in the RMP, however they provide core local government services to all constituents.

(ii) 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

Local Civic Services

Library and Cultural Heritage Services
Civic Events
Local Emergency Services

Community Engagement in Local Government

Training and Employment of local people in council operations
Administration of Local Laws
Public and Corporate Relations
Customer Relationship Management, including complaints and responses
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

Local Government Administration

Financial Management
Revenue Growth
Human Resources
Asset Management
Records Management
Risk Management
Council Planning and Reporting: Strategic, Financial and Service Delivery Planning and Reporting
IT and Communications

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

Barkly Shire Council

Tennant Creek
Elliott
Ali Curung
Ampilatwatja
Urapuntja outstations
Alpurrurulam

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)