



Northern
Territory
Government

DEPARTMENT OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Local Government
Regional Management Plan
July 2012 – June 2016

Big Rivers Region

July 2012



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INTRODUCTION

This local government Regional Management Plan (RMP) for the Big Rivers Region is a statutory instrument under part 3.1 of the *Local Government Act*.

It comes into effect in July 2012 and has a term of 4 years. The RMP can be reviewed and amended during this period.

The local government bodies covered by this plan are:

- i) Katherine Town Council [By agreement]
- ii) Victoria Daly Shire Council
- iii) Roper Gulf Shire 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 defines core local government services and specifies the locations within each shire where core services are to 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 RMP be developed for each of the three regions described in Schedule 1 of the Act.

A RMP is primarily the product of consultation between interested councils in the 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, define core local government services and the communities to which they are to be delivered by the shire councils.

The 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.

A 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 RMP 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 an RMP is to be published on the Agency's website and relevant council websites.

The Act provides that a RMP 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 what services are being delivered to each community.

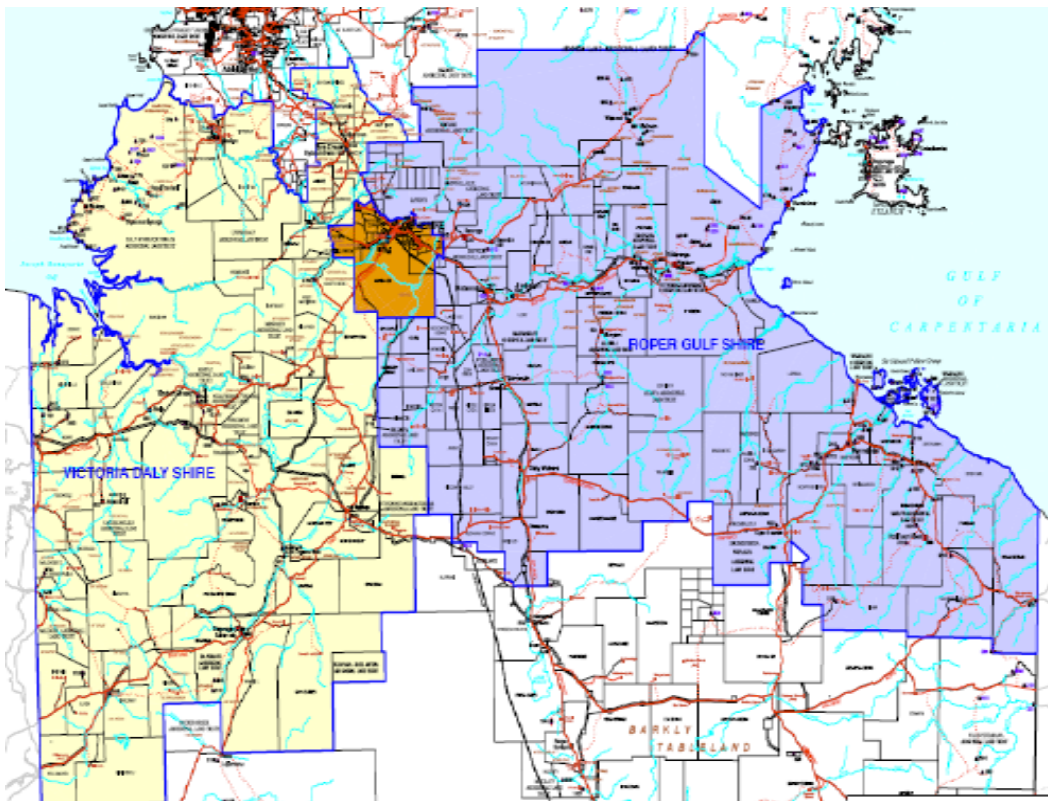
The Act requires that the Minister table the Agency's report before the Legislative Assembly within six sitting days after receiving it.

There are three regional management plans that will cover the Northern Region, Big Rivers Region and Central Australian Region of the Northern Territory.

The Big Rivers Region

The Big Rivers Region covers the local government of areas of Roper Gulf Shire Council, Victoria Daly Shire Council and Katherine Town Council.

Map of the Big Rivers Region



LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGIONAL PROFILE

Local Government Area 2010-11

Local government	Council area (sq. Km)
Roper Gulf Shire Council	185 175
Katherine Town Council	7 421
Victoria Daly Shire Council	167 575
Total	360 171

Source: Northern Territory Grants Commission Annual Report 2010-11

Population:

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

Local government	Population
Roper Gulf Shire Council	7 044 (Indigenous 77%)
Katherine Town Council	10 112 (.....26%)
Victoria Daly Shire Council	7 032 (.....80%)
Total	24 188

Source: Northern Territory Grants Commission Annual Report 2010-11

Local Roads:

Currently, local government is responsible for the management of 14,131km of local roads across the NT. Councils in the Big Rivers Region were responsible in 2010-11 for the following road lengths:

Local government	Council road length (km)
Roper Gulf Shire Council	933
Katherine Town Council	179
Victoria Daly Shire Council	1 124
Total	1 396

Source: Northern Territory Grants Commission Annual Report 2010-11

Council expenditure:

Total Local Government expenditure in the Big Rivers Region in 2009-10 was approximately million. The breakdown of the standardised expenditure for each Council is shown below:

Local government	Expenditure (\$)
Roper Gulf Shire Council	35 086 512
Katherine Town Council	9 849 860
Victoria Daly Shire Council	41 290 959
Total	86 227 331

Source: Northern Territory Grants Commission Annual Report 2010-11

Shire Operational Locations:

VICTORIA DALY SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	Finance and Administration Centre	Community Service Delivery Centres
Katherine	Katherine	Daly River
		Peppimenarti
		Palumpa
		Wadeye
		Timber Creek
		Kalkarindji
		Pine Creek
		Yarralin
<p>Other communities to receive local government core services:</p> <p>Note: Legal advice is being sought by Victoria Daly Shire Council on the delivery of Shire Operation in Palumpa due to Service Centre and Workshop lease expiry.</p> <p>Local roads serviced throughout the shire council.</p>		

ROPER GULF SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	Finance and Administration Centre	Community Service Delivery Centres
Katherine	Katherine	Borroloola
		Ngukurr
		Barunga
		Wugular (Beswick)
		Manyallaluk (Eva Valley)
		Numbulwar
		Bulman
		Jilkminggan
		Mataranka
<p>Other communities to receive local government core services: Minyerri, Daly Waters and Larrimah. Local roads serviced throughout the shire council</p>		

KATHERINE SHIRE COUNCIL		
Headquarters	Finance and Administration Centre	Community Service Delivery Centres
Katherine	Katherine	Katherine

SECTION A: BIG RIVERS OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

Challenges

The shire councils have the challenge of providing a benefit that all residents can participate in, whether they live on communities or outstations/homelands; 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 many cases, people are living in circumstances of 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 Big Rivers 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.
- 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.
- 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 and assets with restricted maintenance funding required to bring it up to standard.
- The physical size of the areas the shires deliver services to. For example, Victoria Daly Shire is twice the size of Tasmania.
- Central Land Council and Northern Land Council leasing agreements for assets in Victoria Daly Shire and Roper Gulf Shire to be decided by August 2012.

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 Big Rivers Region are:

- Sharing of knowledge and policies with a view to the standardization of procedures, service delivery and by-laws.
- Establishing a joint regional headquarters in Katherine which will foster further service production capacity through shared arrangements such as financial management.
- The potential to have a strong Big Rivers Region voice on the Territory and national stage advocating for infrastructure and other improvements that will lead to a stronger 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 minimum numbers of students to be achieved and 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

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 *Local Government 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*.

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 along with any strategic and/or community 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.

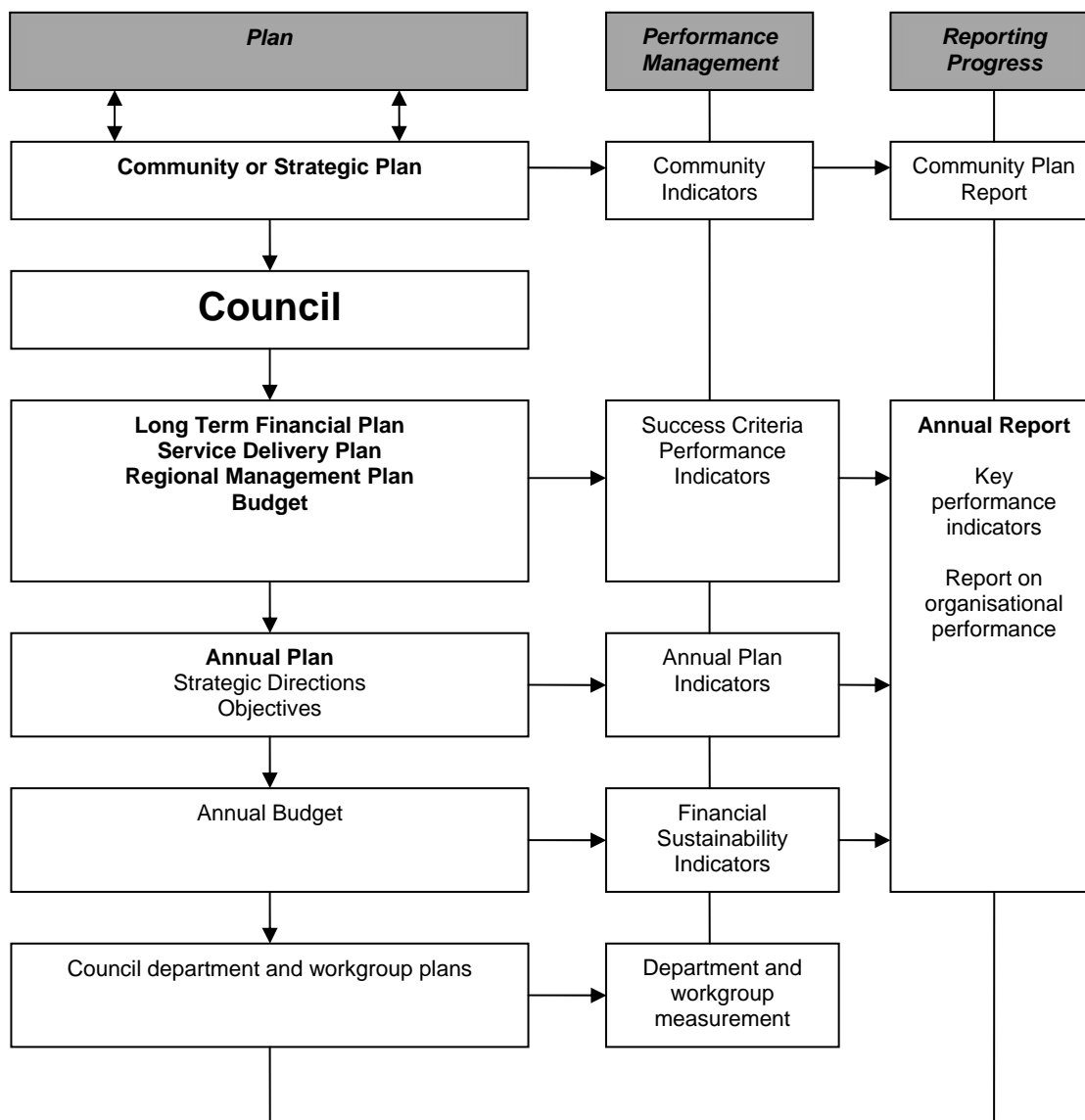
The provisions of Part 3.2 of the Act require that a council review and revise its municipal or shire plan before 31 July each year. This enables each council to formally consider its service delivery to the community in the light of any current or emerging challenges and opportunities and whether it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

A council is also required by the Act to develop performance indicators for each of its key objectives so that the standard of its performance can be assessed by the constituents, funding bodies and other key stakeholders. The report of this assessment will form a critical part of the council's annual review of the municipal or shire plan in the annual report.

Performance indicators are required:

- In the shire or municipal plan: Indicators for judging the standard of its performance
- In the annual report: The report must also contain an assessment of the council's performance against the objectives stated in the relevant municipal or shire plan (applying indicators of performance set in the plan).
- In the annual budget: The budget for a particular financial year must outline:
 - (i) the council's objectives for the relevant financial year; and
 - (ii) the measures the council proposes to take, during the financial year, towards achieving those objectives; and
 - (iii) the indicators the council intends to use as a means of assessing its efficiency in achieving its objectives; and

Performance Management framework



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: BIG RIVERS 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.

Existing cooperative arrangements entered into by councils in the Big Rivers Region under this Plan

(To be included)

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

The Roper Gulf Shire Council, Victoria Daly Shire Council and Katherine Town 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 Big Rivers Region 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 ESTABLISH THE FEASIBILITY OF A BIG RIVERS REGIONAL WASTE
MANAGEMENT STRATEGY.**

Strategies

- Form a regional waste management steering committee to appoint a consultant.
- Katherine Town Council, Victoria Daly Shire Council and Roper Gulf Shire Council have agreed on terms.
- Steering committee to tender for a consultant to advise on:
 - shire waste management service
 - land tenure issues
 - environmental issues
 - security issues
 - rehabilitation issues
 - financial cost plan
 - regional opportunities

Outcomes

- Regional waste management agreement between participating councils and other relevant stakeholders.
- Joint regional waste management policy.
- Improved waste management systems and services.
- Will be dependent on results produced by consultant engaged.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Tender let	July 2012	Annual Reports	The indicator shows that a consultant has been engaged.	Reference to progress in annual report 2012-13
Delivery of report by consultant	December 2012	Annual Reports	The indicator shows that the consultant's report has been produced to the councils involved.	Reference to progress in annual report 2012-13

**GOAL 2:
TO ESTABLISH A JOINT REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR VICTORIA DALY
AND ROPER GULF SHIRE COUNCILS IN KATHERINE.**

Strategies

- Planning, site location and permits completed.
- Funding and business model developed.
- Tendering for building contractual arrangements.
- Construction of the facility.
- Ongoing facility management program developed.
- Applications for funding joint regional headquarters submitted.
- Terms of reference for steering committee formulated.

Outcomes

- Joint Roper Gulf Shire Council and Victoria Daly Shire Council regional headquarters are established in Katherine.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Construction program management schedule.	Key stages of the construction timeline are identified.	Internal council contract manager.	Key schedules and timelines are being met	Narrative in shire plans and reports.

**GOAL 3:
INVESTIGATE, DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A BIG RIVERS REGIONAL
DOMESTIC ANIMAL STRATEGY.**

Strategies

- Investigate funding opportunities for development and implementation of Big Rivers Regional Domestic Animal Strategy.
- Advocate Northern Territory Government to develop local al domestic animal management working group.
- 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

- To be determined upon investigation of funding and joint regional development opportunities.

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

**GOAL 4:
TO DEVELOP RESOURCES AND PROCESSES FOR BY-LAW DEVELOPMENT.**

Strategies

- Identify opportunities for sharing of resources and information in regard to by-law development.
- Establish community specific by-law community consultation policy and procedures.

Outcomes

- By-law resources developed to suit the requirements of participating local governments.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Employment of Special Projects coordinator	Date of employment	Annual report	Coordinator employed for the purpose of community consultation, development and implementation of by-laws.	Narrative in Annual report
By-laws developed	Date of development	Annual report Council website	By-laws produced by the local governments that suit local needs and requirements.	List of by-laws produced

**GOAL 5:
TO EXPLORE JOINT TENDERING, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT
ARRANGEMENTS, POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS.**

Strategies

- Explore the establishment of a joint tendering and procurement agreement, policies and protocols.
- Explore opportunities in joint tendency and procurement through organisations such as Local buy.
- Explore the establishment of a working group with shire and municipal councils, DHLGRS, LGANT, IPWEA and a professional accounting body to develop sound asset management strategy principles.

Outcomes

- Each participating local government has an asset management policy and strategy that adheres to the jointly developed asset management principles.
- Consistent treatment of infrastructure assets across the participating local governments for recognition, measurement, classification, disposal, depreciation treatment and reporting of asset categories.
- Financial forecasts are linked to the funding needs for asset management, strategies to enable identification of the funding needs for replacement, renewal and upgrades.
- Councils are able to purchase goods and services at a reduced cost.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Measurement	Source	Explanation	Representation
Joint procurement working party established	Date group established	Annual report	Strategy achieved	Narrative in annual report
Shire councils adoption of joint policies, procedure and strategy for procurement	Adoption of policies, procedure and strategy	Annual report	Strategy achieved	Narrative in annual report

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: DEFINITIONS OF CORE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND WHERE THEY ARE TO BE DELIVERED IN THE REGION

Core local government services are those services provided by all councils within a region to the locations identified in the regional management plan.

The provision of these services is dependent on the availability of funds and their feasibility.

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

(2) 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.

Core: Local Infrastructure

Core services	Definitions
Maintenance and Upgrade of Council Controlled Parks, Reserves and Open Spaces	Parks, reserves or gardens and other open spaces on council lands, including ovals, are developed and maintained for the use and benefit of recreational activities of the communities. Excludes road reserves and the maintenance and upgrade buildings, facilities and fixed assets councils are responsible for.
Maintenance and Upgrade of Council Controlled Buildings, Facilities and Fixed Assets	Council controlled buildings (e.g. public toilets, council offices & depots, recreation & sport buildings) are managed and maintained in a usable and reasonable condition fit for use.
Management of Cemeteries	Cemeteries are managed and maintained in a clean and orderly condition and in a manner appropriate to provide a caring setting for the remembrance of the deceased. All burials other than those on Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 must abide by Cemeteries Act.
Lighting for Public Safety including Street Lighting	Assist Power and Water Corporation to provide adequate and functioning street lighting for public safety.
Council Controlled Local Road Upgrading and Construction	Upgrading the standard of existing roads and constructing road infrastructure to provide a higher level of service to road users. This does not include the maintenance of roads.

Council Controlled Local Roads Maintenance	Road maintenance including pot holing, shouldering, grading, resealing, line marking and rehabilitation. It does not include construction on new roads, upgrading or widening of existing roads, road management costs, drainage costs or maintenance of the roads.
Traffic Management on Local Roads	Traffic management to regulate, warn and guide road users, including street signs and traffic signs on roads (including road safety audits).
Fleet, Plant and Equipment Maintenance	Manage and maintain shire owned and controlled vehicles, plant and equipment (includes mobile fleet and fixed plant).

Core: Local Environment Health

Core services	Definitions
Waste Management	Plan for and deliver waste management services that reduce the risk of harm to the community, are environmentally sustainable and include waste management strategies for waste reduction, reuse and recycling (including fencing).
Weed Control and Fire Hazard Reduction In and Around Community Areas	Control of noxious weeds on council controlled roads, parks, reserves, and open spaces.
Dog control	Support the implementation of programs for the control of dogs to protect the health, safety, amenity and environment of the community. The provision of a service that promotes responsible care of animals.

Core: Local Civic Services

Core services	Definitions
Library and Cultural Heritage Services	Support the provision of library and information services which promote and support the recreational and lifelong learning needs of the community and increase community participation in cultural heritage services.

Civic Events	To provide support for the development of community events and increase community participation in events activities.
Local Emergency Services	Assist the lead agency in the management of the delivery of emergency services and advocate for the provision of appropriate services to remote communities.

Core: Community Engagement in Local Government

Core services	Definitions
Training and Employment of Local People in Council Operations	Support the employment of local people in council operations with provision for ongoing skill development and training.
Administration of Local Laws (by-laws)	Development, monitoring and enforcement of by-laws for a safe and healthy community.
Public and Corporate Relations	Provision of communication and information between Council and Communities.
Customer Relationship Management including Complaints and Responses	The provision of high standards of service and assistance to the community including complaint management.
Governance including Administration of Council Meetings, Elections and Elected Member Support	Activities relating to the election of council representatives, electoral boundaries, the administration of council meetings, the terms and conditions of councillors and elected member support.
Administration of Local Boards, Advisory Boards and Management Committees	Provision of secretariat or other support to local boards and management committees and implement effective governance at regional, ward and community levels.
Advocacy and Representation on Local and Regional Issues	Development of proactive partnerships with government agencies, the non-government sector, the private sector and development of partnerships with key stakeholders.

Please refer to the each shire council's service delivery plan for a description of the service, service objectives, outcomes and performance indicators.

Locations where core services are to be delivered in the Big River Region

Core local government services will be delivered in the locations listed below if:

- (1) A lease can be secured on land and buildings; and
- (2) Appropriate levels of funding are available.

Victoria Daly Shire Council

Daly River
Peppimenarti
Palumpa
Wadeye
Timber Creek
Yarralin
Kalakaringi
Daguragu
Pine Creek

Roper Gulf Shire Council

Borroloola
Ngukurr
Barunga
Wugularr (Beswick)
Bulman
Manyallaluck
Numbulwar
Jilkminggan
Mataranka
Werenbun
Jodetluk
Minyerrri
Daly Waters
Larrimah