



**Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government
Rural-Remote and Indigenous Local Government Program**

Northern Territory Scoping Study

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Status of Study

The Study is a first round "scoping study", consciously designed and conducted as such. It is not a comprehensive research report structured and guided by an analytical framework, along with comparative data and insights. As a scoping study, it identifies, highlights and proposes in fulfilment of its immediate aims. It is a contribution to the way forward -- as a means, not an end, of fostering appropriate collaborative action by ACELG, CDU and numerous other contributors committed to the future of local government in and beyond the NT.

Focus of the Study

The Study concentrates on the NT's Shire councils, which are the result of an extensive regionalisation reform in 2008. The Shires are the concern of ACELG's Program 5 in the NT. They are clearly rural-remote and Indigenous in terms of their distinctive geographical and demographic characteristics. They have considerable needs and challenges to which ACELG, CDU and other institutions should respond collaboratively in areas of capacity building, development and training, financial management, policy and research – all aimed at supporting and enhancing their governance, administrative practices and service delivery systems.

Approach of the Study

The Study was approached in four interrelated ways comprising various research and analytical methods.

1. Considerable desk-top research, ethnographic field work involving numerous local interviews and surveys, and interaction with staff of the NT Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services (DHLGRS), Shire councils and other stakeholders.
2. Interviews with Shire chief executive officers, plus discussions with staff of the DHLGRS, with staff of the Local Government Association of the NT (LGANT), and with Shire and other council members present at a LGANT meeting.

Approach of the Study (Cont.)

3. A draft of the Study was emailed, essentially as a discussion paper, to an array of relevant organisations and individuals as an effective means of widening the scope and bases of the consultation and advice.
4. Following receipt of responses to the draft Study and after selected follow-up discussions, the present version of the Study was written. The responses and discussions served to strengthen the structure and content of the Study, while also confirming and validating the needs and challenges which the Study highlights and in regard to which necessary action is proposed.

Shire Needs and Challenges

The particularly pressing needs and challenges of the Shires of significance to ACELG, CDU and other contributors include:

- Councillor and staff training and development
- Community relations, participation and engagement
- Service planning and collaboration
- Financial and asset management
- Workforce composition
- Economies of scale

Other ACELG Programs and their relevance to the Shires

The ongoing needs and challenges of the Shire councils offer considerable scope for ACELG, CDU and other institutions to contribute to an array of activities of significance to their future well being. The particular contribution in each case is appropriately determined as part of a national strategy that seeks to bring together key players within and across governmental, community and market jurisdictions.

Possible activities are outlined in broad terms under each of ACELG's other five Program titles. They complement or confirm the importance of necessary action already proposed in the Study.