

ID: 629528 – APB

27 March 2025

Committee Secretary  
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory  
Legislative Scrutiny Committee  
GPO Box 3721  
DARWIN NT 0801

By email: [LA.Committees@nt.gov.au](mailto:LA.Committees@nt.gov.au)

Dear Secretary,

## City of Palmerston submission to the Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

I am writing on behalf of City of Palmerston in response to the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory's invitation for submissions to the Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The City of Palmerston is in support of the proposed changes to the *Local Government Act 2019* (the Act).

### Modernisation of the publication of notices generally

We welcome the CLP's proposed changes to modernise the Act in respect of no longer requiring publication of notices in a locally circulating newspaper and not requiring the posting of notices on council notice boards. Council concurs that publication on respective councils' websites are adequate and contemporary.

We understand that publication to newspapers and notice boards remains optional to support the local community as determined by respective councils, where this has proven to be effective for those communities.

### Changes to the Powers of the Local Government Representation Committee

We are in support of the changes to the powers of the Local Government Representation Committee, as this holds better regard to the institution of Parliament, with the Minister retaining the final decision on whether councils should have wards or remain undivided, based on appropriate community consultation, within the considerations specified in the Act.



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Without delving into the specific, the City of Palmerston was previously subject to a questionable determination under the existing legislation, with the only avenue of appeal being the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. This amendment allows the community to be consulted, and recommendations made to the Minister for a final decision, thus allows a council to make their position known to the Minister without taking action in the Supreme Court.

We further believe that the representation on this committee should be reviewed, as the current representation requirements do not align with the interests of all councils. The City of Palmerston are not Members of Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, and so the CEO of LGANT does not represent the interests of the City of Palmerston or any other council who chooses not to be a member of LGANT.

Further, the Electoral Commissioner and Surveyor General have limited understanding of the requirements in the Act to consider *Communities of Interest* and may interpret this to suit their sphere of expertise rather than the meaning of community.

### **Filling of Casual Vacancies**

The Council has made previous representations to the Minister regarding the ambiguity of s 54 of the Act. We support this amendment as it provides clarity in the options that councils have to fill casual vacancies.

However, we note that there is inconsistency in the proposed wording between clauses 54(2)(b)(i) and 54(2)(c)(i), and request that the words “decide to” are removed from the proposed clause 54(2)(b)(i) for consistency.

The Council is also in support of proposed clarity in the clause for s 65 for the filling of a casual vacancy of the principal member.

### **Timeframe for advertising CEO Vacancy**

We support the extension of the timeframe for Council to advertise a CEO vacancy from 6 weeks to 8 weeks.

The City of Palmerston has recently undergone CEO recruitment. The tight time frame to meet all the requirements of advertising the vacancy under the legislation, regulation and ministerial guidelines places significant pressure on the council to meet this requirement in 6 weeks. The City of Palmerston Council meets twice per month, and meeting this requirement required careful planning, with several special meetings called to progress the CEO appointment. The existing timeframe would be difficult to meet for regional councils who meet monthly or once every two months without calling for several Special Meetings to address this requirement.

### **Clarity for the declaration of rates and imposition of charges.**

The Council supports amendments to clarify the requirements for passing of resolutions in relation to the declaration of rates, annual budget and imposition of charges.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and would be available for further discussions on these amendments and further changes to the Act in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Athina Pascoe-Bell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Mayor Athina Pascoe-Bell**