

Media Release

Historic election date set for Central Darling Shire as NSW Government commits \$6 million in support

Wednesday, 18 June 2025

The remote communities of Central Darling Shire in far west NSW will head to the polls on 20 September to elect council representatives for the first time in more than a decade.

Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig and Member for Barwon Roy Butler will today meet with Central Darling Shire Council in Wilcannia to provide an update on the next steps as the Council prepares to exit administration.

To support Central Darling Shire Council's transition back to elected representation and to set the Shire up for a more sustainable future, the Minns Labor Government has also committed \$6 million in the upcoming 2025-26 State Budget.

The \$6 million in funding, to be delivered over two years, will assist the Council in achieving long-term financial stability. The funding will support capacity building and the delivery of essential local government services and infrastructure projects critical to the Shire's future.

This significant step marks the next chapter for the residents of Central Darling Shire and establishes the state's first Rural and Remote Council, made possible by legislation passed last year.

Under this new governance model, Central Darling Shire Council will comprise of six councillors. Three will be elected by the community each representing one of the established council wards, and three councillors will be appointed by the Minister for Local Government.

The hybrid structure is designed to ensure strong local representation while maintaining stable governance through the inclusion of appointed members with relevant skills and expertise.

The NSW Government's Rural and Remote Council model addresses the unique challenges faced by councils in geographically isolated and sparsely populated regions.

Central Darling Shire is the largest council by land size but has one of the smallest populations, with less than 2,000 residents. The council has been under administration since 2013 due to long-standing financial and governance issues, and it is currently the only local government area in NSW without an elected council.

The Government previously provided more than \$475,000 to Central Darling Shire to help fund its upcoming election and support councillors in their new roles. The Council held candidate and community information sessions in late 2024, and additional sessions are planned in the coming months to support community participation in the election.

Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig said:

"For far too long, the task of bringing Central Darling Shire Council out of administration was put in the too hard basket.

"With an election date now set, we are another step closer to returning elected representation for the communities of the Shire.

“The \$6 million funding support will help set Central Darling up for long-term success and give assurance to communities that the Council can provide the services and infrastructure they deserve.

“Reaching this milestone wouldn’t have been possible without the tireless advocacy of the Member for Barwon.

“Roy has fought for many years to achieve this result and has worked with the government every step of the way to reach this outcome for his communities.”

Member for Barwon Roy Butler said:

“It’s a first positive step back towards democratic representation, but it marks a significant change for Central Darling after more than a decade in administration.

“I’d like to thank the Minister Ron Hoenig for hearing the desire of the communities in the Central Darling Shire to return to some form democratic representation and for changing legislation to allow this start back towards elected representatives.

“This model has the capacity to change to allow more elected representatives in the future. Its success will depend on the community getting behind it and getting involved.”

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