

## Commonwealth Inquiry into Local Government and Cost Shifting Interim submission

**Name:** Pine Creek Community Government Council  
**Population:** 630  
**Geographic Size:** 400 sq klm  
**Current Budget:** refer current funding arrangements below

### Overview of Historical Development of the Council:

The town of Pine Creek was formerly administered by the Pine Creek Progress Association from the early 1950's to 1987. Over the past 100 years the town has had numerous mining booms and busts. In 1985 the towns population tripled with the commencement of Pine Creek Goldfields and consequently lead to the establishment of the Pine Creek Community Government Council in 1987. In 1995 Goldfield operations ceased and mining at Union Reefs commenced which is still mining today.

### Pine Creek Council - current roles and responsibilities (taken from Pine Creek Business Plan 2002-2005)

#### Administration

• Financial Management	To strengthen and manage the councils financial position and to achieve Councils goals by ensuring the effective and efficient utilisation of councils financial resources
• Intergovernmental Relations	To promote and encourage cooperation with all spheres of Government so that Pine Creek receives fair and equitable treatment
• Public Relations	To promote Councils initiatives and programs and maintain a good rapport with the community
• Personnel Management	To encourage and maximise proficient performance of Council staff and members
• Risk Management	To identify various risks associated with Councils programs and adopt a plan for dealing with them
• Corporate Services	To provide Council with services that support its in house activities
• Town Planning	To influence town planning decisions by recommending actions which are based on input from the community
• Animal Control	To control the keeping of animals in the community by enforcing the Pine Creek (Control of Dogs) by laws

#### Community Services

• Sanitation & Garbage	To provide hygienic, effective methods of waste collection, disposal and management. Encourage recycling
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	where viable.
• Public Conveniences	To provide clean and hygienic public toilet facilities
• Street lighting	To ensure adequate and efficient street lighting within the township
• Cemetery	To provide and maintain a cemetery in keeping with its historical significance

#### Recreation and Culture

• Sports & Recreation	To encourage and facilitate sport, recreation, arts and cultural activities and events within the region. To provide, maintain and upgrade sporting facilities within the town.
• Library Services	To provide an adequate efficient library service for residents and visitors
• Tourism & Economic Development	To promote and encourage tourism and economic development strategies within Pine Creek in keeping with the historic significance of the town.
• Parks & Gardens	To provide, maintain and beautify parks and gardens within Pine Creek
• Hall and Public Buildings	To provide, maintain and upgrade public buildings for use by the community and visitors to the town
• Out of School Hours Care	To provide a n out of school hours care program
• Vacation Care	To provide a part time vacation care program for school age children
• Aged Care	To provide a transport service for the aged, frail and disabled

#### Roads

Roads & Infrastructure	To construct, maintain and upgrade local roads and footpaths within the Pine Creek scheme area
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## **Current funding arrangements**

### **a) Operating grants (untied:)**

- Operational subsidy - allocated by NT Govt to Councils with Community Govt Status. This grant has decreased by \$53,000 since 1994. Received \$227137 2001/02 financial year.
- Commonwealth Assistance Grant (FAGS): Has decreased by \$10,000 over last 6 years. Received \$27300 in 2001/02.
- Local Roads grant - introduced in 1993 when local roads (construction and maintenance ) and associated works (footpaths, drains, signage etc) became Councils responsibility. Received \$109997 2002/02.  
Note: Council has taken out 2 loans of \$200,000 in 1995/96 and \$250,000 in 1999/00 to carry out major road works within the town boundary. Local road grant monies used to repay the loan. Monies from op subsidy is used to top up when general maintenance required.

### **b) Tied and Recurrent Grants**

- Capital Grant: Decreased by \$15,000 since 1994. Received \$38982 in 2001/02. This grant is specifically for capital projects or infrastructure over \$5000.
- Dump Maintenance Grant: Introduced in 1995/96 when the Govt handed dump maintenance over to local councils. The grant has decreased by \$5000 since 1995. Received \$6704 in 2001/02.
- Library grant: Received \$16444 in 1994/95. Received \$14112 in 2001/02. Council operational subsidy is used for any shortfall in library operations.
- OSHC grant: Recurrent grant of approx \$5700 to provide limited after school activities.
- Vacation Care Grant: approx \$4000 to run limited school vacation care program
- HACC grant: \$5500 for bus running costs for Pine Creek Transport Service for aged and disabled

- **c) Special Purpose Grants (applied for annually)**

Office of Local Government

- \$25,000 SPG to assist with dump maintenance since 1997/98 due to the high cost to maintain the Pine Creek dump to a required standard to prolong the life of the dump given its present location.

Dept. Sports & Recreation

- \$12,000 Salary Assistance Grant –  
Employment of part time Arts & Recreation Officer. Operational subsidy used for shortfall in this area.
- \$10,000 (average) Sports facility grant to assist with upgrade of existing sports facilities (NB – Council unsuccessful in its bid for sports facility grant for 2002/03 financial year.) Council provide \$ for \$ funding and more for large projects.

**Regional Organisations:**

Pine Creek Council has been a member of the Top End Triangle since 1999 which includes Pine Creek, Coomalie, Jabiru and Gunbanya Councils. The Top End Triangle endeavour to meet bi monthly to discuss and implement resource sharing opportunities, joint cost cutting measures and proposed boundary extensions.

**Contract work undertaken for State.**

Council undertakes slashing of some vacant crown land within the town boundary for the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment for maximum \$4000 per annum. Note: There are numerous areas of crown land in the town boundary that are not slashed or cleared and several open unlined drains that require clearing/maintenance on an annual basis however the Dept has advised funding is not available to carry out these works.

Council receive from the NT Housing Commission \$100 per week agency commission (inspections, maintenance complaints etc) and 5% of rents received. Allocation of Govt. housing in Pine Ck, maintenance and repairs is handled from Katherine Govt Dept.

**Work undertaken that is not part of normal activities:**

- Provision of TV/radio tower & associated equipment. Introduction of 3 TV stations and 1 radio station. Ongoing maintenance/service costs met by Council.
- Pine Creek Weather Station
- Tourism Development/Promotion
- Maintain/insure Aircraft landing area

Given the many services that Pine Creek Council provide it has been fortunate in the past to manage and carry out Council operations and responsibilities efficiently with very limited long term staff and local contractors. The capacity to keep providing these services, ongoing development and maintenance is rapidly declining due to Councils limited resources, the continuous reductions in grants/subsidies, the inevitable rising costs in every area of Council functions and increasing Government compliance issues. Many of councils functions are not covered by any form of grant or conventional Commonwealth or Territory cost funding. We are forced to provide services for our residents so that they have services and a quality of life equivalent to that of City based people.

Local Government bodies in Capital cities and large urban centres are not penalised with this financial impost. Regional Australians cannot continue to be treated as second class citizens.

The Pine Creek Council will prepare a more detailed submission at a later date and would like the opportunity to attend any hearings being held in the region in relation to the inquiry.